

Regent thanks Prince Hassan for national efforts

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Abdullah, the Regent, together with his brothers, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal and Prince Ali, visited HRH Prince Hassan at his residence and thanked him for his sincere efforts throughout the past three decades in the service of the country and its people. Also Tuesday, Prince Abdullah received Sheikh Mustafaeel Ben Ma'ashari, uncle of Oman's Sultan Qaboos, who arrived in Jordan to check on His Majesty King Hussein's health. The Crown Prince thanked Sheikh Mustafaeel for his brotherly gesture and his noble feelings towards the King, which, he said, "reflect the depth of bilateral Omani-Jordanian ties." The meeting was Prince Abdullah's first official encounter with a foreign guest.

Albright due in Saudi Arabia for Iraq talks

RIYADH (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will visit Saudi Arabia on Wednesday for talks with King Fahd and other Saudi leaders likely to focus on Iraq. Western diplomats said on Tuesday. It will be Albright's first visit to the Gulf region since Operation Desert Fox last month when U.S. and British forces bombed Iraq for four nights over Baghdad's alleged failure to cooperate with United Nations arms inspectors. Western diplomats described the timing of Albright's visit to the kingdom as fortunate.

Clergy urge halt to U.S. aid to Israel, PNA

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A group of nearly 1,000 American religious leaders on Tuesday urged President Bill Clinton to halt U.S. aid to Israel and the Palestinian National Authority over human rights abuses. The clergy, including more than 130 Protestant and Roman Catholic bishops, said aid should not be restored until each side complied with international human rights conventions particularly in the area of arrests and torture during interrogation. Pending their compliance, aid should be given to Israeli and Palestinian groups "working for peace based on human rights," the leaders said in a message to the White House.

Child charged with murdering sister

ORLANDO (R) — An 11-year-old Florida youth faced first degree murder charges on Tuesday after police said he shot his 13-year-old sister in the back as she was eating breakfast. The body of Constance Boykin was found on the kitchen floor on Monday after her brother, Patrick Boykin Jr., called a police emergency number and reported she had been shot, police said. The boy, who police said used a gun that belonged to his father, was charged on Monday evening.

Ex-Russian spy chief to testify in favour of journalist

VLADIVOSTOK (AFP) — A former high-ranking Russian intelligence officer on Tuesday unexpectedly decided to testify in favour of military journalist Grigory Pasko, accused of spying for a foreign power. Yuri Malosimov, the former chief of intelligence for Russia's Pacific Fleet, will support Pasko, 34, a navy captain and journalist who reported that the fleet dumped radioactive and chemical waste in the Sea of Japan. The investigative journalist for the fleet's newspaper, who also did reporting jobs for the Japanese NHK channel and the daily Asahi, was arrested on Nov. 20, 1997 on his return from a mission to Japan.

List of French Gestapo agents opened to public

PARIS (R) — France's national archives have just given the public access to the list of French agents of the Gestapo secret police, nice ammunition for those who have always been suspicious about what their neighbours did in the war. But anyone who publishes the names of the Nazis' World War II collaborators does so at his own risk and could be sued. Censor Pauline Rene-Bazin said on Tuesday the long classified list was in the archives of the BCRA, the wartime Free French Secret Services, which have just been opened to the public.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية المستقلة

Volume 24 Number 7055

AMMAN WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1999, SHAWWAL 10, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

King leaves for treatment, Prince Abdullah sworn in as Regent

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah was sworn in as Regent on Tuesday hours after His Majesty King Hussein designated him as Crown Prince, replacing his younger brother HRH Prince Hassan after 34 years as second in line to the Throne.

The brief ceremony, held at the Royal Court, came before the King left for the United States for urgent medical treatment after what his private physician said was a "low blood count and fever."

Samir Faraj, who accompanied the King yesterday, was quoted as saying that since the Monarch's return to Amman a week ago, doctors noticed an occasional increase in his temperature and "they feared the result of initial tests which indicated a low blood count produced by bone marrow."

King Hussein's departure left Prince Abdullah, 36, in full charge in his first day in office and crowned a hectic week in which the Monarch surprised many Jordanians by removing Prince Hassan for meddling in army affairs during the King's six-month absence for chemotherapy treatment in the United States as well as refusing to name one of the King's sons as next in line to the Throne after Hassan's reign.

Prince Abdullah, who was given full Constitutional powers with the exception of carrying out any amendments to the constitution and negotiating and signing treaties, "pledged allegiance to the King and to the Constitution" during the ceremony, anointed by members of the government as well as a number of prominent Jordanians and military commanders. Prince Hassan, who was removed at dawn on Tuesday, did not attend the swearing-in ceremony.

But he was at the airport, together with his wife, Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvaath, to bid farewell to the

Monarch, who was supporting himself with a cane as he boarded the plane.

The King left Jordan just one week after a triumphant homecoming, including a drive in an open-topped car through the rain-hit streets of the capital which doctors fear may have brought on the recurrent fever and low blood count they diagnosed.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the "King took great risks to his health on his return to Amman last week driving through the cold and rain in an open-topped vehicle to greet the hundreds of thousands of Jordanians who took to the streets to welcome their leader back home."

Petra said the decision to return to the Mayo Clinic was taken after the King's doctors consulted with their colleagues abroad.

Reuters quoted a British oncologist in London late Tuesday as saying, "There are many features in lymphoma that might worry his [the King's] doctors. The commonest cause of temperatures is infection, and of course his immunity will have been lowered by the treatment he has already had." Professor Barry Hancock told Reuters.

Hancock, who is head of clinical oncology at Weston Park Hospital in Sheffield, England, and an expert on lymphoma added: "That is one possibility. The other is that one of the features of active lymphoma is that patients get a temperature. If the lymphoma is still persistent after a bone marrow transplant, it may be much more difficult to deal with."

For people that have had transplants and still have lymphoma, the situation is much more difficult," he added. Cases of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma have increased by approximately 80 percent since the 1970s, making it one of the fastest growing cancers.



His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Noor, HRH Crown Prince Abdullah, the Regent, and HRH Prince Ali, shakes hands with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh Tuesday in Amman prior to his departure to the United States for further medical examinations. (Photo by Meldos)

King receives message from premier

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received a cable from Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on the occasion of the appointment of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah as Crown Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In congratulating the King and Crown Prince, the prime minister pledged to continue to work for the betterment of the Kingdom.

Following is the text of Premier Tarawneh's letter:

Your Majesty,
May God protect you
And peace be upon you

The Council of Ministers and I have received with due respect and commendation your Royal Decree and decision on selecting His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein as Crown Prince.

We fully confident throughout the ages that Your Majesty has never failed his people and country; believe that what is issued by Your Majesty expresses sincere love for this country and its people, and great keenness on safeguarding its national interest with a true vision of the

older," said Hancock. The survival rates depends on the type of lymphoma, which is divided into low and

future and national institutions which Your Majesty has fostered.

Jordan has become a state of institutions protected by a Hashemite Constitution which allows for unhindered decision-making.

The Council of Ministers and I deeply congratulate Your Majesty and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah, pledging to follow your directives and those of your Regent, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, pledging also that we will exert all our efforts to serve this country and its people.

Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh also sent a cable to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, the Regent, congratulating him on his designation as heir to the Throne. The premier said it was a great honour and pleasure to congratulate Prince Abdullah on behalf of the Council of Ministers. He said the designation "brightens the image of prosperity and promise Jordanians hold for you as a Jordanian Hashemite."

Tarawneh pledged the Cabinet's allegiance to the Crown Prince and beseeched God for the safe return of King Hussein to Jordan.

high grades. Patients with the higher grade type usually receive chemotherapy. "With this group, you tend

Statement on protocol for congratulating Crown Prince

AMMAN (Petra) — The Office of Royal Protocol Tuesday issued a statement on protocols to be followed for congratulating His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah, the Regent, on the occasion of his designation as heir to the Throne.

The Prime Minister, Senate president, Lower House speaker, chief of the Royal Court, president of the Judicial Council, His Majesty King Hussein's advisors, ministers, senators, deputies, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the directors of the Public Security, General Intelligence, and Civil Defence departments will gather for congratulations at Raghadan Palace at 10 a.m. today, the statement said. All other well-wishers are to assemble in the back courtyard of Raghadan Palace. On Thursday, governors, mayors, retired military veterans, tribal leaders and dignitaries, members of the Charkasian and Shishani tribal council as well as camp notables are to assemble.

The Royal Court yesterday received a number of cables congratulating King Hussein and Prince Abdullah on the designation of Prince Abdullah as Crown Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Cables were received from HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mura' Kaab-

either to cure patients or they run into big problems within a couple of years in which case it can be fatal. With the

neh, the director general of the Public Security Department, Lieutenant General Nasouh Muheiddin, Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid, former Health Minister Jamal Shaer, Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali, Lower House Deputy Bassam Haddadin, the president of the Jordanian Businessmen's Association, Hamdi Tabbaa, and Jordan Press Association President Seif Shent.

Also Tuesday, the Regent received congratulatory telephone calls from several Arab heads of state: Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, Bahraini Crown Prince Hamad Ben Isa Al Thani, Dubai Crown Prince and Defence Minister Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashid Al Maktoum, Bahraini Prince Salman Bin Hamad, Saudi Prince Abdul Aziz Ben Abdullah, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Zayed of the UAE, Prince Walid Ben Talal, Prince Ismail Ben Abdullah, Prince Fahd Ben Salman Al Saud, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, General Ali Ben Majed Al Muammar of Oman, and Elsa'd Al Qadha' of Libya. United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sulian Al Nahayan expressed his country's support for the steps taken by King Hussein and stressed that the UAE is studying means to lend support to Jordan in order to enable the Kingdom to continue its regional and national role.

Pentagon admits missile hit Iraqi civilian area Clinton approves more aggressive military action

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. warplanes fired at targets in Iraq Tuesday as the Pentagon confirmed that a missile launched during a U.S. attack on Monday went astray and struck a residential part of Basra. Iraq has said a number of civilians were killed.

U.S. jets again struck at Iraqi targets Tuesday after violations of the "no-fly" zone in northern and southern Iraq, the Defence Department reported.

Kenneth Bacon, spokesman for Defence Secretary William Cohen, said that after careful review, U.S. officials had concluded, "One AGM-130 [missile] did miss its target." He said, however, that U.S. officials had "no independent confirmation" that it killed any Iraqis.

"We regret any civilian casualties," Bacon said.

The spokesman said it was not yet clear what caused the missile to miss its target. He described it as "highly accurate" and said Air Force F-15E strike planes would continue using it.

Iraq claimed that three U.S. missiles struck residential areas in and around Basra in southern Iraq. Bacon disputed that, saying only the AGM-130, launched by an F-15E plane, went astray. He said the errant missile landed in the Al Jumhuriya neighbourhood of Basra.

Western reporters who visited Al Jumhuriya said four homes were destroyed and six damaged. Earlier Tuesday, President

Bill Clinton's national security adviser said the president has given the U.S. military a green light to respond more aggressively to Iraqi challenges to American and allied aircraft patrolling the "no-fly" zones over northern and southern Iraq. "We're acting here in self-defence and in response to concerted attacks by Saddam Hussein," Sandy Berger told reporters.

He said that after the U.S. and British attacks on Iraq in mid-December, Clinton approved U.S. military commanders' request for "more expansive rules of engagement" to attack Iraqi air defences. Pentagon officials have repeatedly refused to confirm any change in approach, except to say they

consider the entire Iraqi air defence network to be a legitimate target for U.S. attacks.

"Since Saddam has more systematically challenged our enforcement of the no-fly zone, our pilots understand and our Air Force understands that if there are violations of the no-fly zone... that our response as appropriate will be against any of the air defence systems that we think make us vulnerable," he said.

Berger, referring to Iraqi reports that 11 civilians were killed by errant U.S. missiles on Monday, reiterated that the U.S. military has tried to avoid civilian casualties but in any case believes it is resistance by Saddam, the Iraqi president, to the no-fly zones that is to blame for

mistakes.

On Tuesday, the Pentagon reported two Iraqi violations of the "no-fly" zone in northern Iraq and said a Marine Corps EA-6B Prowler, an electronic warfare plane, fired a high-speed anti-radiation missile after being targeted with radar at an Iraqi air defence site near the city of Mosul. Results of the Prowler attack were unknown.

Also Tuesday, F-15E strike aircraft fired guided bombs and an AGM-130 missile at anti-aircraft artillery emplacements and surface-to-air missile sites, also in northern Iraq, the Pentagon said. Other details were not immediately available, spokesman Col. Richard Bridges said.

Saddam lashes Kuwait, S. Arabia over strikes

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Tuesday renewed his harsh criticism of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and promised his people that their bloodshed and patience would in time bring victory.

Without naming them, Saddam accused the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait of involvement in U.S. attacks on southern Iraq on Monday, when missiles fired by U.S. aircraft killed 11 people and injured dozens.

"Those of dead consciences who carry Arab nationality in name only, and their masters, are condemned by the Arab Nation for their failing act," Saddam said, in a message carried by all official Iraqi media.

Saddam has used similar language in recent weeks to attack Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which he says helped the United States and Britain by providing

bases for their airborne attacks on Iraq last month.

Iraqi parliamentarians also lashed out at the two Arab countries at an extraordinary session of the National Assembly, some urging the government to revoke recognition of Kuwait to punish it for giving the Western allies bases for their aircraft.

"Our beloved people, be patient as victory is achieved through patience," Saddam said in his message, addressed to residents of the southern city of Basra, the centre of the area hit by U.S. missiles on Monday.

Missiles fired by U.S. warplanes reduced several houses in Basra and nearby villages to rubble. Iraq said five missiles were fired, killing 11 people and injured dozens.

In Abu Fulleus, a small village 25 kilometres south of Basra, the dead

were buried on Monday, but mourning continued on Tuesday.

The village men folk gathered in tents set up on the muddy streets, while women chanted for the six women and children killed when a missile plunged from the sky.

"Your blood will not be shed in vain," Saddam promised in his message. He did not say how he would react to the U.S. strikes.

Iraqi MPs renewed their open attacks on the Kuwaiti and Saudi leaders. "I call upon the National Assembly members to adopt a recommendation to revoke recognition of Kuwait, demarcation of borders and to confront the Kuwaiti-Saudi conspiracy," said MP Ahmad Mohammad Al Atoushi.

But another MP, Mohammad Mudhafer Al Adhami, said that what MPs wanted was to scamp recognition of the

Iraq-Kuwait border demarcation, not that of Kuwait itself.

Hamed Yousif Hummadi, MP and a former information minister, urged the Assembly to call for an Arab tribunal to put the Kuwaiti and Saudi rulers on trial.

"I call for setting up an Arab popular tribunal in order to try the Saudi and Kuwaiti rulers," Hummadi told the 250-seat National Assembly. Most MPs who spoke at the extraordinary session also called on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to pay compensation for "the human and material losses" caused by the four-day U.S. and British air raids against Iraq in December.

The deputies called for the rejection of all U.N. resolutions on Iraq linked to the cease-fire that ended the 1991 Gulf war.

Israel razes Arab home in Jerusalem; five protesters hurt

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel on Tuesday razed an Arab-owned home in Arab east Jerusalem, and helmeted troops protectively ringed the demolition equipment fired rubber-coated bullets at Palestinian protesters who hurled stones toward the house.

Four Palestinians were hurt by rubber-coated bullets, including one who was in serious condition with a head injury. A fifth was treated for bruises after being clubbed by Israeli troops.

One of the injured, Zaki Obeid, fell to the rocky ground after being struck in the face by a rubber-coated bullet, bleeding profusely. He lay motionless for a few moments before being carried away by friends to the cries of "Allahu Akbar," or "God is Great."

Obeid was in serious condition in the intensive care unit at Hadassah Hospital, hospital officials said.

Four other Palestinians were treated at Mukassas Hospital and released later Tuesday.

Israel's interior minister said it issued a demolition order because Daoud Aziz, a resident of the Izzawiye district in

traditionally Arab east Jerusalem, had built his two-apartment home without a building permit.

The Palestinians say Israel uses building permits as a form of population control and rarely grants licences in areas where it wants to cement its control.

On Tuesday morning, after having exhausted all legal means to stop the demolition, Aziz and his relatives moved their furniture and belongings out of the home.

Scores of riot police stood guard as a bulldozer and a jackhammer mounted on a heavy vehicle ripped into the home.

From a distance, Palestinians threw stones toward the scene and troops fired rubber-coated bullets to disperse them.

Rabbi Arik Ascherman, a human rights activist whose group tried to block the demolition said Palestinians have no choice but to build homes without permits.

"It is almost impossible for Palestinians in east Jerusalem to get a [building] permit... and this is done for no reason other than that they are Palestinian," Ascherman said.

Algerian ruling party sacks boss, names ex-PM

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria's main ruling party ousted its leader on Tuesday for refusing to support an army-backed candidate in a presidential election due in April, a party spokesman said.

Mohammed Maghlaoui said more than two-thirds of the National Democratic Rally's (RND) 251-member policy-making council voted to sack Secretary General Tahar Benbaibiche and replace him with former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia.

"More than 190 members of the council gathered on Tuesday and elected Ouyahia as the new RND secretary general," Maghlaoui told reporters after the meeting at an Algiers hotel.

Benbaibiche, who spoke of army pressures in favour of

former Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika's candidacy for the presidency, had urged the party to select its own candidate.

Bouteflika is widely seen as an army-backed contender to replace President Liamine Zeroual, who is ending his five-year term 19 months early.

Algeria has been racked by violence since early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which radical Islamists had taken a commanding lead. More than 65,000 people have been killed, according to Western estimates.

Benbaibiche had already dismissed the council's meeting as illegal, saying only a full RND congress could decide a

leadership change. Politicians were divided over whether he would still claim the leadership or break away to form another group.

Ouyahia, a staunch supporter of the military which has dominated politics since independence from France 37 years ago, resigned in December amid reports he might enter the poll race.

He later joined an RND majority in backing Bouteflika, now dubbed by his supporters as a "national consensus candidate."

The 48-year-old Ouyahia has been widely criticised as the least popular prime minister for what some politicians and main newspapers said was his failure to stop violence and ease a deep economic and

social crisis.

Among RND officials who voted to oust Benbaibiche were several government ministers, including Finance Minister Abdelkrim Harchaoui, and Parliament speaker Abdulkader Bensalah.

The RND has 156 seats in the 380-member parliament and dominates the current government in coalition with the National Liberation Front (FLN) and Islamist-based Movement for a Peaceful Society (MPS).

The FLN backs Bouteflika while the MPS has named its leader Mahfoud Nabhah to run among some 15 politicians who have already announced their candidacy for the poll.



An Iranian woman is seen Tuesday through the shattered window of the office of the Iranian daily Khordad that was damaged in a grenade attack overnight which left two people injured. Two men riding a motorbike were seen throwing a handgrenade into the offices of the daily which supports moderate President Mohammad Khatami (AFP photo)

Amnesty says Syria holding 'many' political prisoners

AMMAN (J.T.) — Amnesty International on Tuesday claimed that Syria was holding many detainees and isolating them from the outside world merely for "political reasons."

The London-based organisation said authorities in Damascus do not recognise the existence of these prisoners despite evidence from their relatives that they are being held in Syria.

"Those people were arrested as part of the regional and political conflicts in the region, some of them have been held for 20 years," Amnesty's three-page report released yesterday said.

"These people were not able to appeal their detention [sentences] nor were their families able to find out their whereabouts," the report said.

The report said the fate of "tens of these people who disappeared after being apprehended by the Syrian security authorities" remains unknown.

According to Amnesty, most of the arrests took place during the 1975-1990 civil war in Lebanon, where many Jordanians and Palestinians were members of Palestinian organisations.

The report said most of the Lebanese prisoners, estimated to be more than 35,000 soldiers, were arrested or "kidnapped" by Syrian forces in Lebanon or handed over by Lebanese military intelligence to Syria.

It added that Jordanian and Palestinian detainees were apprehended "either at the Jordanian-Syrian borders or inside Syria itself."

The report said more than 300 Jordanian, Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners who were detained for political reasons have "disappeared" in Syria.

The report followed a failed campaign by families of Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners in Syrian jails, whose figure is estimated at several hundred, to secure their relatives' release.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bahrain must free men held without trial

LONDON (R) — Human rights group Amnesty International has urged the release of eight prominent Bahraini opposition figures detained for three years without trial. "The administrative detention of eight men held for their non-violent political and religious activities must come to an end," Amnesty said in a statement received by Reuters on Tuesday. It said the eight men included key opposition leader Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jami — a prominent Shi'ite Muslim cleric and a former member of the parliament which was dissolved in 1975.

Iranian ambassador takes up Bahrain post

MANAMA (AFP) — An Iranian ambassador took up his post in the Bahraini capital on Tuesday for the first time since the two countries recalled their ambassadors in 1996, the official news agency GNA said. It said the new ambassador, Mohammad Jalal Firouzina, met Bahrain's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa for talks on "current developments in the Gulf and the Arab World."

Israeli spy trial adjourned

LARNACA (AFP) — The trial here of two Israelis accused of espionage was swiftly adjourned Tuesday when the prosecution wanted to present "sensitive evidence" that needed to be heard behind closed doors. "If this testimony is made public it could endanger the security of the state," prosecutor George Papaioannou said, calling his first witness, National Guard officer Vassos Kountouris. Kountouris, a member of the army general command, is expected to testify about the significance of the marks made by the accused on eight maps of Cyprus found in their flat when they were arrested early November.

Mubarak says Netanyahu welcome in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Tuesday Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would be welcome in Egypt once he had left government. During a discussion with writers and journalists at the inauguration of the Cairo book fair Mubarak was asked his opinion of Saturday's dismissal of Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, just before he was due to visit Egypt. "If Mordechai wants to come, he is welcome, even after leaving the government," Mubarak replied.

Tlass to discuss military cooperation with Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass will hold talks on military cooperation here early next month with his Russian counterpart, Igor Sergeev, the defence ministry said Tuesday. Spokesman Igor Kastychin would not comment on reports in the Russian press that Moscow and Damascus would sign a deal for a five-year programme of military cooperation worth \$2 billion.

Little chance of extradition to Yemen for Briton

LONDON (AFP) — The British authorities said on Tuesday they might consider a request by Yemen for the extradition of a London-based Islamist militant, but a legal expert indicated it would be unlikely to succeed.

In a letter given to Britain's ambassador in Sanaa for Prime Minister Tony Blair, Yemen's president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, a day earlier requested the extradition of Abu Hamza Al Masri, to stand trial on terrorist charges.

A spokesman for the British Home Office said that although Britain did not have an extradition treaty with Yemen, Sanaa could "make an ad hoc request and an ad hoc request could be considered."

But despite new legislation passed last year in Britain in response to pressure from Middle Eastern governments who have accused London of harboring Islamists, Abu Hamza has little to fear, extradition expert Stephen Byers said.

Evidence would have to be produced proving that the Egyptian-born cleric had conspired or financed terrorist activities abroad, said the professor of international law at Oxford University. Incitement or promotion of terrorism is not an offence under the new legislation, as this would contravene the principle of free speech in Britain.

Saleh's letter accused Abu Hamza of "committing acts of terrorism and sabotage in Yemen and in a number of Arab countries."

Abu Hamza has admitted have links to an Islamist group responsible for the kidnapping of 16 Western tourists last month which ended in the deaths of three Britons and an Australian.

His stepson, Mohsin Ghallanis, 18, is one of five British Muslims already facing terrorist charges in Yemen. Abu Hamza is suspected of sending them to the country to attack British and U.S. targets.

"The individual here [Abu Hamza] has been very carefully advised by lawyers as to what he can say and what he cannot say, what he can do and what he cannot do," said Byers.

"It's not a crime in this country to give speeches," even very harsh ones, he underlined, adding that the Yemeni authorities "would have to demonstrate evidence" of the accusations.

British government sources confirmed this view, telling The Guardian newspaper that police and prosecution authorities had investigated Abu Hamza, and concluded there was no case against him.

The head of the London-based Supporters of Sharia (Islamic law), who lost an eye and both hands fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, claimed Monday he would not receive a fair trial in Yemen and would fight extradition.

Abu Hamza, whose group organises Islamist training from its headquarters at a north London mosque, has said force could be justified to overthrow the Yemen state.

Sudan extends partial ceasefire

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail said on Tuesday that Sudan had agreed to extend a partial truce with rebels in famine-hit regions in the south of the country until mid-April.

The United Nations has been trying to persuade the warring parties in southern Sudan to extend the ceasefire because it is crucial to the delivery of food aid to famine areas.

Ismail said the partial truce would apply to the Bahr Al Ghazal region and western Upper Nile in southern Sudan.

"We have extended the ceasefire in Bahr Al Ghazal for three months as of the 15th of January, but I hope this will be the last partial ceasefire," Ismail told a news conference, referring

to the truce which had included the Upper Nile area.

Ismail was speaking after talks with Norway's Minister of International Cooperation and Human Rights Hilda Johnson and Italy's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Rino Serri.

The delegates represented partners of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), an African group mediating in Sudan's civil war in which rebels have been fighting for more than 15 years for greater autonomy for the south.

Ismail said Sudan opposed partial truces because he said the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had "misused" them.

"As could be observed last year, the SPLA used

the truce in Bahr Al Ghazal to attack Equatoria," he said.

The SPLA had already agreed to extend the ceasefire and Sudan rebel leader John Garang said in Cairo this month that they wanted to extend it to facilitate relief work.

Hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes when fighting erupted in Bahr Al Ghazal last year and the disruption of agriculture sparked a famine which killed thousands.

Ismail had said SPLA support for a partial truce was aimed at deflecting attention from a rebel military build-up elsewhere.

"The intention of the SPLA in the partial ceasefire is to mass its troops in other areas..." Ismail said on Monday.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — Red Beard
16:30 Half Way Across The Galaxy
17:00French Doc.
17:15French programme
17:30Masters of The Maze
18:15French programme
19:00News in French
19:15French programme
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — 2 Point 4 Children
20:00French programme
20:30N.Y.P.D. Blue
21:15 Doc. — Science & Technology
21:30Faces & Places
22:00News in English
22:30Cover story
23:10The Album Show
00:00End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

05:08Fajr
06:28(Sunrise)Dhuha
11:48Dhuhr
14:43Asr
17:08Maghreb
18:28Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

4624853/4624811.
St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweidh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology

A drop in temperatures is
expected with chances of scattered
showers. Winds will be
northwesterly moderate. In

Aqaba, it will be partly
cloudy, winds southeasterly
moderate, and seas calm.

Amman05/13
Aqaba09/20
Deserts03/18
Jordan Valley12/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 22
Humidity readings: Amman
65 per cent, Aqaba 55 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:

Ajloun03/09
Jerash05/14
Um Qays06/14
Madaba05/13
Petra03/14
Dead Sea11/22

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Bassam Karadshah 4389200
Dr. Khalid M'addi 5661144
Dr. Salman Daboubi 5812518
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 4894788
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rula Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'mineh (02)250800
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi (09)903469
Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Waste & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
4787111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5859886
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akhil Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Mushar Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)90560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hilema Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272775

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(44)53200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be
supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ)
Flights
07:30Damascus (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:55Larnaca (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
17:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)

Other Flights

09:30Cairo (MS)
10:30Jeddah (SV)
12:00Kuwait (KU)
13:10Tunis (TU)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:05Rome (AZ)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:30Algiers (AH)
18:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:15Frankfurt (LH)
00:55 London, Damascus (BA)
01:25Athens (OA)
02:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
18:30 Haifa (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at
QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

06:50Larnaca (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

09:45Istanbul, Rome (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
19:30Colombo (RJ)
19:35Beirut (RJ)
20:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:15Bombay (RJ)
20:35New Delhi (RJ)
21:00Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
21:15Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
21:25Cairo (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights

06:30Larnaca (CY)
07:25 Damascus, London (BA)
07:25Paris (AF)
10:30Cairo (MS)
12:00Medina, Jeddah (SV)
13:20Kuwait (KU)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
14:10Tunis (TU)
15:30Vienna (OS)
15:30Rome (AZ)
16:20Sharjah (AH)
19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
00:35Amsterdam (KL)
02:45Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
16:00 Haifa (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Home News

Immunisation campaign to resume in March or April

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — The nationwide diphtheria and tetanus vaccination campaign for students will be resumed in March or April, Dr. Adnan Abbas, health ministry secretary general said Tuesday. More than 200,000 students will be vaccinated by the end of this school year. Abbas told the Jordan Times. The immunisation campaign was interrupted last September after more than 600 students complained of high fevers, headaches, dizziness and nausea following vaccination. Officials investigating the incident said at the time that the symptoms were the result of high susceptibility to the anti-diphtheria and tetanus serum — symptoms

health experts said were common after such a vaccination. The vaccines were produced under Canadian licence by a Hungarian company and were donated to Jordan by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A special committee was formed after the first cases of symptoms appeared. The team examined inoculation, storage, refrigeration and conservation procedures. The findings of this committee were that the serum had been treated correctly. Additionally, laboratory tests conducted on samples of D&T vaccines by the World Health Organisation (WHO) showed that there was nothing wrong with the vaccines.

Abbas again affirmed that there had been nothing wrong with the serum itself. He added that the chain of refrigeration beginning from the airport to the various health centres, and finally to the schools, had not been interrupted at any point. "After having made sure that we had not erred, we now plan to resume the vaccination campaign," he said. Abbas said that historically vaccination campaigns in Jordan have been successful because of the population's high level of awareness of health matters. "What worries us is the effect that the halting of the last D&T vaccination campaign might have," Abbas said. Massive media cover-

age of the incident, he said, frightened some citizens against vaccinations in general. "We have noticed a decline in the number of mothers having their children vaccinated," Abbas said. The Ministry of Health is currently working on a health education campaign in collaboration with UNICEF, WHO, and universities to restore popular confidence in vaccines, but also to alert them to possible side effects. "The new D&T serum has been bought by the Ministry of Health and is produced by the French company Pasteur Merieux," said Dr. Mazen Abdul Majid, director of the Jordan Vaccination Institute.

Jordanians breathe sigh of relief at end to speculations, rally around Throne in support of King Hussein

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Jordanians from all walks of life had been waiting with bated breath for days in expectation of Tuesday's official announcement of the appointment of a new Crown Prince. Although the official media have been silent on the issue, most were following the swing of news reports, through Arabic and international newspapers, or by zapping through satellite TV stations in their homes and tuning in to international radio broadcasts in their cars. Finally, at 1:30 a.m. Jordan Television read out a Royal Decree appointing HRH Prince Abdullah as Crown Prince and a letter from His Majesty King Hussein to HRH Prince Hassan.

But only a few hours elapsed before speculations, put to rest after six days, were followed by new and urgent concerns, as news spread of King Hussein's sudden departure to the U.S. early yesterday to receive emergency medical treatment. At first, the streets showed mixed reactions to the replacement of HRH Prince Hassan as Crown Prince after 34 years of active engagement in helping run the country's affairs. "People trusted Prince Hassan, they had been

observing him over the years tackling the country's problems," said one opposition deputy. "It is only natural that people are both happy for the appointment of Prince Abdullah, and saddened for the removal of Prince Hassan." Some said they were surprised by the King's swift resolution, others expressed bewilderment at the "harshness" of the King's letter to Prince Hassan informing him of his decision. But people abandoned theories and personal opinions and rallied ranks around the Hashemite Throne, the institution uniting the Jordanian family.

Each Jordanian has his or her favourite among the candidates for succession," said an intellectual. "But now there is neither more nor time for that anymore." "We have to be united, to overcome yet again another difficult time." Some believed that Crown Prince Abdullah, the Regent, will require exposure on the international and regional political scene. This will take some time, they said. "We are confident that the King chose what he knows is best for the Hashemite dynasty, for the country and its long term interests," said a 44-year-old businessman. "With some time, with the support he has from the army and with the help he will get

as Crown Prince from all state institutions, there is confidence that he will show outstanding competence," he added. "Prince Abdullah has spent many years next to the King and he has acquired a lot of his outstanding qualities and popular appeal," said a long-time diplomat. "The King also knows that he enjoys the full confidence of his people, and that they will extend this confidence to his Crown Prince." Officials and diplomats brushed aside concerns over the Kingdom's stability and ruled out any change in foreign policy, especially towards peace. "Jordan's stands have been clear to everybody for decades," one senior official said. "Nobody doubts that peace is a strategic option for Jordan," he added.



SCOUTING IT OUT:

Lebanese diva Fairuz checks the stage at Amman Private University Tuesday. The Lebanese singer will hold two concerts Jan. 28 and 29, her first in Jordan in 16 years. She'll play to standing room only in the university's new auditorium. Tickets to see the legend live fetched as much as JD100 for front row seats (AFP photo)

AFM feels 'setback' but finance experts remain optimistic 'No need to worry' says Bargouthi

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Active early morning trading on the Amman Financial Market (AFM) witnessed a "set-back" following the news Tuesday that His Majesty King Hussein had left suddenly to the U.S. for medical treatment. "Trading started very strongly, especially in pharmaceutical and mining firms," Naim Nageeb, a broker, told the Jordan Times. "This situation prevailed until the last half hour of trading when news came about His Majesty's trip for treatment. At that moment things began to slow."

The official AFM 60-share index reversed three consecutive days of gains to drop 1.07 per cent to 179.61 points in turnover worth JD5.13 million. Optimism after the King's return to Jordan following a six-month absence for cancer treatment, had investors rallying since the market opened on Saturday to push the index above the 180 point psychological barrier on Monday. "There was a sense of unease on the floor following the news which surprised everyone," Mohammed Bdeisi, another broker, said. "I think this situation will continue on this rhythm for some time, until good news arrives about the King's health," said Bdeisi who is also the head of the Brokers Association.

The Arab Bank had the highest turnover of shares, valued at JD1.3 million. The bank share price dropped by JD2 to JD215 per share. The Jordan Cement Factories Company followed with 335,144 shares traded, valued at JD1.2 million. Shares in the public shareholding company lost JD0.010 to sell at JD3.790. The appointment of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah as Crown Prince Monday was expected to reflect positively on the economy, according to some market analysts. "The new changes will enhance the political stability in the country and will reflect positively on the economy as a whole," said Mufleh Agel, a senior Arab Bank official. "For a long time, the issue of succession was of concern to the business community, but now with that settled things will move ahead strongly," Agel told the Jordan Times. Agel said that although the King's departure yesterday is "painful for the business community... it will not have any impact on the economy."

"Nothing unusual took place after the King's departure, and no sudden demand on foreign currencies was registered on the market," he said. Nidal Bargouthi, former chairman of the Foreign Exchange Association, concurred. News about the King's illness will not affect the demand for the U.S. dollar, "which has been, until now, normal." "The sudden rush for the dollar after the King left for the U.S. last July for treatment will not recur," the foreign exchange expert said. Last July more than \$200 million were purchased in less than a week of the King's departure. "People here are aware that things are stable in this country and no major changes will occur to the Kingdom's policy. I do not think there is any need to worry," Bargouthi said.

Government resumes customs exemption for taxis

By Mhannad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The government has decided to resume issuing exemptions to taxi-owners who turned in their old vehicles to the Customs Department for free exchange after a sudden halt to the three-year-old decision, an official said Tuesday. According to the official who requested anonymity, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh is expected to have signed the decision on Tuesday. The government's deci-

sion came after repeated complaints from taxi-owners and dealerships who said the three-week halt dealt them a big financial blow and described the decision as "hasty and irresponsible." The Customs Department three years ago had drafted new regulations that allowed owners of taxis and service cars to surrender their old vehicles, without compensation, to the Customs Department to qualify for exemptions from customs duties on replacement vehicles. The Customs Department in turn began

selling off the cars, mostly as scrap. The measure was a dramatic boost to transport sector, particularly in improving the quality of the taxis and service taxis on Jordan's roads and in replacing the Kingdom's ageing fleet of trucks. The Cabinet's four-year old decision was designated to end in 2000. But the government's recent reversal had the private sector transport industry in a stew. "The sudden halt confused the car dealership sector which has made arrangements according

to the market's expected demands," said Ziad Bustami, general manager of Nissan Company. "We had already ordered shipments of cars, which are now on the way to the country. The government should have taken this step much earlier because we already lost a great number of our customers, and that will cause a great loss for us," Bustami told the Jordan Times. A 1200 cc-engine car imported for private use can cost as much as JD13,000. The same car would cost about JD7,000 with an exemption.

Dam agreement signed with French group

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation Tuesday signed a JD22 million agreement with two French firms to construct Al Tanour Dam at Wadi Hassa in the southern Tafleeh Governorate. Minister of Water and Irrigation Hani Mulki, who signed the agreement with managers of the two French firms, said after the signing ceremony that the project entails the construction of a 69 metre high dam to help create a reservoir to hold about 16.8 million cubic metres (mcm) of rain water. The dam is needed to store rainwater for the irrigation of the

agricultural lands in the southern Jordan Valley region at the rate of three mcm annually in addition to an estimated 8.4 mcm for the Arab Putash Company near the southern tip of the Dead Sea, according to Mulki. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development is financing part of the project, which should be completed in 27 months, the minister said. Jordan at present has several main dams and smaller earthen dams to collect rainwater for irrigation. The largest of these is the King Talal dam which has a 72 mcm capacity, but now holds

only 32 mcm due to a lack of rainfall so far this winter. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation said last week's rainfall increased the amount of water stored in the dams by 2.4 mcm. One of the managers of the French consortium undertaking the project said the dam is the fruit of cooperation between Jordan and France in the water and irrigation fields noting that the French consortium will implement the project in conjunction with a Jordanian engineering consultancy firm.

What's Going On

EXHIBITIONS

• "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.
• The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Durat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

American University poised to give Aqaba an economic and cultural boost

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Jordan is expected to open its first university at the Southern Red Sea port of Aqaba within the coming five years amid mixed feelings linked to the derailed peace process. Analysts regard this university, to be named the American University of Jordan, as a symbol of the end of a half a century war between Arabs and Israel. The strategically-located university hopes to attract students from the region including Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Jordan and Israel. One observer closely involved in the negotiations for project told the Jordan Times that the university's founders had initially believed such a university would set a good example of coexistence and peace in

the euphoria that followed the signing of the Washington Declaration and the Peace Treaty. "The general belief then was that peace was eminent in the region," the source said. A land lease agreement for the establishment of this multi-million American University of Jordan was signed last month in Jordan by a group of American investors and the Higher Council for Science and Technology. The \$10 million concern, in the making for the last three years, is to be located at the southern tip of Aqaba, home to some 70,000 Jordanians. Investors are a mix of established academics and peace-lovers, hailing from the American state of Kentucky and including Arab-American Zahi Masri.

"This is a great investment which will widen Aqaba's horizons with a new type of investment, an investment in education, that carries with it both long-and short-term effects" — Smadi

"They founded a society and registered it according to American law with the intention of creating a university in the Middle East," said Adnan Abu Odeh, former chief of the Royal Court. "The founders have formulated a board of directors, and are now in the process of setting up a board of trustees," said Abu Odeh, who has been asked to join the board of directors. An option, he says, he intends to accept. "The founders are about to contract an American firm to raise funds since the university is a non-profit tax exempt organisation in the United States," Abu Odeh told the Jordan Times. He added that fund-raising for the university had been delayed after Jordan postponed the signing of the land lease early last year.

Funds are expected to be generated from university tuition, as well as Saudi Arabian, Qatari, Egyptian, and Israeli donors. At the time of this interview, Mohammad Smadi, former director of the Aqaba Region Authority (ARA), said this investment will benefit Jordan as the founders will be providing an otherwise barren area with much needed infrastructure. "Jordan is keen on maximising the use of limited and barren land in this area," he told the Jordan Times. The Jordanian government has made the land lease marginal. Observers believe that the infrastructure and development required for the establishment of this university will create a quality community with cultural value. "This is a great investment

which will widen Aqaba's horizons with a new type of investment, an investment in education that carries with it both long-and short-term effects," Smadi said. He explained that the university will have three components. The first is a 1,600-dunum campus off the shore of Aqaba. Two other segments, located nearer to the shore, will have an 800-dunum plot for housing and another 60 dunums for a tourist village and a five-star hotel. "This facility will be commercial in nature, to generate income to subsidise and sustain the university," Smadi said. The ARA board leased the land for the campus and housing to the Higher Council in May last year. The council is the official channel used for the licensing of such ventures.

Officials at the Higher Council refused to comment on the deal. The southern city of Aqaba is slated to be transformed into a free zone this year. Its new designation is expected to bring an additional 60,000 residents to the area and create more employment opportunities. The Aqaba South Coast Tourism Development Plan, the main tenet of Aqaba's development and was launched in 1996 at the Amman Economic Summit. But of the 100 development proposals forwarded by the authority, the ARA received only seven bids to develop the Aqaba area as obstacles to advancement in the peace process arose. Smadi remains optimistic and said that the university programme should take account of local and regional specificity of Aqaba.

"Graduates should be specialised in areas relevant to the future investment of the area," he said. The ARA recently donated 45 dunums of land to the Noor Al Hussein Foundation to establish a college there affiliated to the United World Colleges. "We expect that this project will be off the ground within the coming three months," Smadi said. Observers believe that the enthusiasm with which investors initiated the project has lost some steam due to the stalemate in the peace process, especially after Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party took over. "Rahin's assassination and the coming to power of the Israeli right has given all those investors, who had good intentions, second thoughts," one observer said.

Top Khmer Rouge leaders quit jungle, join government

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The top ideologue of Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge, Nuon Chea, and nominal leader Khieu Samphan have given up their jungle-bound rebel life to join the government, officials announced Saturday.

After discussions with Prime Minister Hun Sen the pair split from Ta Mok, the brutal military chief of the group. Friday and moved to the western town and former rebel stronghold of Pailin, according to deputy cabinet chief Muth Khieu and deputy chief of staff Meas Sophea.

A senior government source, requesting anonymity, told AFP the pair was due to visit the capital Tuesday. However, officials refused to reveal details of the deal struck between them and Phnom Penh.

In a series of hand-written letters to Hun Sen — obtained by AFP early Saturday — Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan asked to be allowed to defect and "strengthen peace and stability, national reconciliation and the development of Cambodia."

Along with Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan played leading roles under late supreme Pol Pot during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-1979 regime, when as many as two million Cambodians died.

The two are likely to stand trial in a proposed international tribunal for Khmer

Rouge crimes against humanity, awaiting a go-ahead from United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

But in return for their pledge of allegiance, they are unlikely to face any criminal proceedings inside Cambodia.

Nuon Chea wrote: "I respect and recognise the constitution of Cambodia, respect and recognise the royal government of Cambodia with Hun Sen as prime minister and support the political platform of the government, and support the supreme role of the king."

"That is why I wish the royal government to give concessions and permit my only request to return to society and live as a normal citizen," the 71-year-old added in the bid to end his fugitive jungle life.

Khieu Samphan's three-page letter came after a Christmas Day telephone conversation with Hun Sen, and requested that the premier pass on the defection request to King Norodom Sihanouk.

"As I had told your excellency through (the) telephone, my request is to return and live as a simple citizen," Khieu Samphan, 67, wrote.

In a written response Hun Sen — himself a one-time Khmer Rouge field commander — welcomed the pair to the government fold, and said their determination and actions had shown their



Two of the top remaining Khmer Rouge guerrilla leaders, Khieu Samphan (second left) and Nuon Chea (third left), shown in this January 1986 file photo, have surrendered to the Cambodian government saying they want to live as "normal citizens", the Cambodian government said Dec. 26. Pictured in this file photo taken at a camp in Western Cambodia are Khmer Rouge leaders (from left) Son Sen, Khmer Rouge Defence Minister; Khieu Samphan, nominal leader of the Khmer Rouge; Nuon Chea, former Khmer Rouge party deputy secretary; the late Pol Pot and Yan Yath, wife of Son Sen (Reuters photo)

"great willingness to end the war, find peace and reconciliation and end the national division."

The ailing King Sihanouk, briefly a head of state for Pol Pot and currently undergoing medical treatment in China, had given his stamp of approval to the defection, officials added.

Nothing has been revealed about the exact whereabouts of Ta Mok, now the only Khmer Rouge leader still at

large and believed to be isolated with just a few bodyguards along the Thai-Cambodian border.

In Pailin the defection duo will join Ieng Sary, the group's former number three and Pol Pot's foreign minister who switched sides in 1996, a step that set in motion the disintegration of the Khmer Rouge through a process of splits, defections and military defeats.

On Dec. 5 the last of the

group's main guerrilla force defected to government ranks.

Much of Phnom Penh's control over the isolated west and north of the country depends on former Khmer Rouge support, while the coalition government and military are permeated by both officials and victims of the group as part of Cambodia's attempts at national reconciliation.

The Khmer Rouge's brutal implementation of agrarian collectivism trans-

formed Cambodia into a vast killing field, wiping out up to two million people through torture, execution, overwork or starvation.

The ultra-Maoist group led by Pol Pot, who died in a jungle camp in April, was driven from power after Vietnam invaded Cambodia in late 1978. None of its leaders has yet been brought to justice.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippine leader sees less kidnappings in the south next year

MANILA (AFP) — President Joseph Estrada said Saturday he was hopeful that kidnappings for ransom in the southern Philippines would decline following the death of a Muslim extremist leader. Estrada said the killing in a gun battle last week of Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, head of the extremist Abu Sayyaf group, was likely to leave its members in disarray. "I am sure the trend of kidnappings will decline," he said in a radio interview. Estrada said Janjalani was "notorious, being the number one mastermind of kidnappings." The country's most wanted man, with a 1.5-million-peso (\$38,000) bounty on his head, was killed in a clash with police in southern Basilan island Dec. 18. The Abu Sayyaf has been blamed for the kidnapping of several foreigners in the southern region of Mindanao, including two Hong Kong Chinese and a Malaysian released last week after 106 days of captivity. Officials publicly said no ransom was paid but military sources said up to 10 million pesos (\$256,000) was paid. Several armed groups operate in Mindanao, aside from the Abu Sayyaf and they have also been accused of turning kidnapping into a lucrative industry. These groups include the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), former secessionist guerrillas turned handouts and security escorts of rival political clans.

Russian hostage freed in exchange for Chechen prisoner

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian policeman held hostage in Chechnya was released Saturday in exchange for a Chechen prisoner being held in Russia, a news report said. Sergei Khalansky, a 41-year-old police inspector in the southern Russian town of Grazhdanskoye, was kidnapped June 9 and taken to the breakaway Chechnya region, the ITAR-TASS news agency said. Khalansky's abductors demanded a large ransom, but in a deal worked out by Alexander Lebed, Khalansky was exchanged for a Chechen prisoner being held in Russia. No details were given about the Chechen prisoner, Lebed, a retired general who negotiated the end to Chechnya's 1994-96 independence war with Russia, has helped in the release of Russian hostages. He is considered a top contender for Russia's 2000 presidential elections. Hostage-taking for ransom has become a booming business in Chechnya, a small Caucasus region awash in violence and crime since the end of the war. More than a hundred Russian and foreign hostages are believed to still be held there.

40,000 Chinese families still without homes after summer flooding

BEIJING (AFP) — Almost 40,000 families who lost everything in China's disastrous summer flooding remain homeless in the northeastern province of Jilin. Xinhua reported Saturday. Only 46,000 of the 85,800 families who lost their homes have been rehoused so far, the official news agency said. Jilin was hit hard by summer flooding this year, with direct losses in the eight worst-affected counties and cities amounting to 45 million dollars. The World Food Programme (WFP) is still providing emergency aid to 5.8 million victims of China's devastating summer floods. The Paris-based aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres said a month ago that some 200,000 Chinese flood victims were still living on dykes and at risk from epidemics and the approaching winter. Official figures show the summer floods, the worst to hit the country since 1954, left 3.656 dead, mainly in the Yangtze River valley. The floods affected 22.3 million people, a fifth of China's population, in 29 provinces along the Yangtze River and the northeast.

U.K. protesters to track hunters with hounds

LONDON (AFP) — Police in Surrey, southwestern England, said Saturday they were bracing for an invasion by several thousand hunting opponents protesting traditional hunting with hounds. "Boxing Day," the day after Christmas, typically sees British gentry turn out to track fox, deer and hares. There are an estimated 350,000 hound hunters in Britain, including Prince Charles and other royals. This year, police say some 300 hunts with hounds were expected, along with corresponding groups of protesters. Animal rights activists condemn the hunts, which consist of running prey, often a fox, down with a pack of hounds as hunters follow on horseback. The dogs often end by running the prey to exhaustion and then ripping it apart. "We try to liaise with both the hunt supporters and the protesters to ensure that everything passes off peacefully," said Chief Inspector David Bosden of Surrey. "But of course we are aware that there is more of a potential for trouble on this particular day," he added. The animal rights group Protect Our Wild Animals also plans to rally in front of Prime Minister Tony Blair's country residence at Chequers. They blame Blair for not making good on a campaign promise to ban the practice. But a proposed law put forward by Labour deputy Mike Foster was shelved in July by conservative deputies in favour of what they consider a sport. Some 250,000 hunters on May 1 rallied in London to show support for the tradition, and to kill the bill. However, a recent poll for the International Fund for Animal Welfare indicated that 66 per cent of the British opposed the hunts.

Founder of China's nuclear programme dies

BEIJING (AP) — Wang Ganchang, the scientist credited with founding China's atomic bomb programme, has died of an unspecified illness in Beijing, state-run media reported Saturday. He was 90. The state-run Xinhua News Agency reported that Wang died Dec. 10 and was cremated Friday at Beijing's Babaoshan cemetery, the final resting place of many of China's revolutionary heroes. A native of eastern Jiangsu province, Wang was graduated from elite Tsinghua University in 1929 and earned a doctorate from Berlin University in 1933. Returning to China the following year, he helped establish China's nuclear research programme. Wang worked as a research scientist at the University of California at Berkeley after World War II, ended in 1945. He returned to China just before the Communists took power in October 1949. Working at a government-run academy, Wang oversaw the design and manufacture of China's first atomic bomb. A front-page report in Saturday's People's Daily, the newspaper of the Communist Party, lauded Wang as the "founding father" of China's nuclear weapons programme and noted that President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji, among many others, had sent condolences upon hearing of his illness and death. "Wang Ganchang was an outstanding representative among our nation's scientists. His passing is a great loss to atomic research in our country and the world," it said.

East Timor bishop reluctant to meet Indonesian president

JAKARTA (AFP) — East Timor Bishop Carlos Ximenes Felipe Belo has rejected an invitation from Indonesia's President B.J. Habibie to meet in the New Year, a report said Saturday. The Kompas daily quoted the Nobel peace laureate as saying there was no need to meet the president until Jakarta put into effect 13 measures which he had suggested for the troubled territory during a June meeting with Habibie.

"Had the 13 points been realised in East Timor, I would have gone to Jakarta and given an evaluation of their implementation," Belo said at his residence in the East Timor capital Dili.

Habibie said Thursday he wanted to meet Belo and another East Timor bishop after the New Year to evaluate the outcome of an agreement between him and Belo during their first talks in June and to address possible new problems.

But Belo questioned the value of a new meeting, saying it was the job of East Timor Governor Abilio Jose Osorio Soares to discuss with Habibie the situation in the former Portuguese colony.

"Governor Abilio all this time has been going back and forth between Dili and Jakarta. Was there no time to report the situation in

East Timor to President Habibie?" Belo asked.

Among the 13 points Belo suggested to help settle the East Timor problem were a gradual withdrawal of Indonesian troops, a referendum on self-determination, the teaching of the local Tetum language and Portuguese in schools and a requirement for migrants to have a job or skills before coming to the territory.

The bishop's meeting with Habibie on June 24 came a month after the resignation of former president Suharto, who ordered the military invasion of East Timor in 1975 and its annexation the following year.

At the June meeting Habibie offered wide-ranging autonomy for East Timor, which the United Nations and most states still view as officially administered by Portugal.

The proposal is currently being negotiated by Indonesia and Portugal in talks held under the auspices of the U.N. secretary general in New York.

Habibie also promised the gradual withdrawal of troops from East Timor but ruled out a referendum on self-determination.

Jailed East Timorese rebel leader Xanana Gusmao has said autonomy should be conditional on a promise for the referendum to be held

after 10 years.

Calls for the release of Xanana, who is serving a 20-year jail term for plotting against the state and illegal possession of weapons, have been made by Belo, many foreign governments and by the U.N. special envoy on East Timor, James H. D. Mark, who ended a nine-day visit here Wednesday.

They said Gusmao should be freed because his "strategic position" could benefit the talks.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas Tuesday said negotiations were "progressing step by step" but admitted that it was difficult to predict when the tripartite dialogue would result in agreement.

Among the tough issues to be settled are that of a referendum. The Indonesian government maintains that autonomy should be the final solution while many sides want some form of self-determination.

Jakarta last week named two diplomats to be assigned to the Indonesian interests section in Lisbon, scheduled to open in January along with a Portuguese interests section in Jakarta.

It was the first thaw in diplomatic relations severed by Portugal after the 1975 invasion.

Taiwan firm sends team to probe Cambodia waste

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's Formosa Plastics Corp said Saturday it would send a team including environmental experts and lawyers to Cambodia to try to resolve a row over mercury-tainted industrial waste dumped there.

"The company has decided to immediately form a team to go to Cambodia to launch an inquiry and handle the case," Taiwan petrochemical giant Formosa Plastics said in a brief statement. "We hope to effectively resolve the matter as soon as possible," the statement said.

Formosa stopped short of saying whether it would take back the 3,000 tonnes of waste as demanded by Phnom Penh. Cambodia has threatened to sue Formosa to compensate for the damage the waste had inflicted at Sihanoukville, where the waste turned up in early December.

"We hope to end the trouble brought to the Cambodian government and the residents as soon as possible and to prevent misunder-

standing from hurting the international reputation of our country and the company," Formosa said.

It said the team would include a lawyer who has had close links with Cambodian authorities, foreign experts, lawyers, and environmental specialists.

It did not say when the team would leave for Cambodia. A Japanese expert said Friday preliminary tests on the industrial waste showed a "very high" and potentially dangerous concentration of mercury.

Cambodia's Environment Ministry's Pollution Control Department made available a copy of a facsimile from Singaporean testing laboratory Matcor Technology & Services, which said analysis of a sample showed a mercury concentration of 675 parts per million.

Formosa has said the cement-like material is tainted with mercury but has been certified by the Environmental Protection Administration as safe

for landfill disposal.

News of the waste sparked riots in the southern Cambodian port of Sihanoukville last weekend in which one person was killed as protesters sacked offices of officials they blamed for allowing its import.

Four more died in a panicked exodus of more than 10,000 people fearing contamination, while the Health Ministry has said the deaths of at least two residents appeared linked to unprotected movement of the waste.

Taiwan environmentalists fetched some samples of the waste from Cambodia Friday to provide to independent experts, Formosa and Taiwan's government for examination. The Environmental Protection Administration said the result would be available within days.

Taipei, which does not have formal ties with Phnom Penh, has urged the Cambodian government to launch a full inquiry before appointing blame. Cambodia recognises only Taiwan's arch rival, China.

Cubans celebrate Christmas wary of Santa Claus

HAVANA (AFP) — Free to celebrate Christmas once again after a 30-year moratorium, Cubans have mixed feelings about the role of Santa Claus in a holiday which they are largely unfamiliar with.

Jolly Saint Nick is being criticised on the island by both Roman Catholic clerics and Communist stalwarts for personifying consumerism and unwanted foreign ideology.

In a 15-minute Christmas Day radio message to the Cuban people, Cardinal Jaime

Ortega prayed for peace and reconciliation — and took a swipe at the puffed fellow in the red suit.

Ortega said he hoped the "commercial attraction of an imported Santa Claus" will not become the core of the holiday, but rather the faith the people have in their religion and the "joy of the heart."

Hard-line Communist militants go even further, stating that Santa Claus is really an agent of U.S. cultural imperialism.

Images of Santa and

"Merry Christmas" banners decorate foreign currency stores, but little such holiday paraphernalia can be found in the peso stores.

This is a "deplorable ideological confusion," lamented the pro-government daily La Tribuna.

"Is there no true Cuban way to celebrate Christmas?" asked the workers' weekly Trabajadores, which lashed out at this "mental colonisation."

The official Communist Party newspaper Friday made no

mention of the holiday. Cubans may be mystified about the controversy: after all, no Cuban under 28 has witnessed a public celebration of the festival on the island before, and many are unsure how to celebrate the key date in the Catholic Church's year.

Christmas was wiped off the official calendar in 1970, when the Communist government of President Fidel Castro declared it interfered with Cuba's sugar harvest.

Although there was no law banning Christmas celebrations in the intervening 30 years, observance was socially taboo.

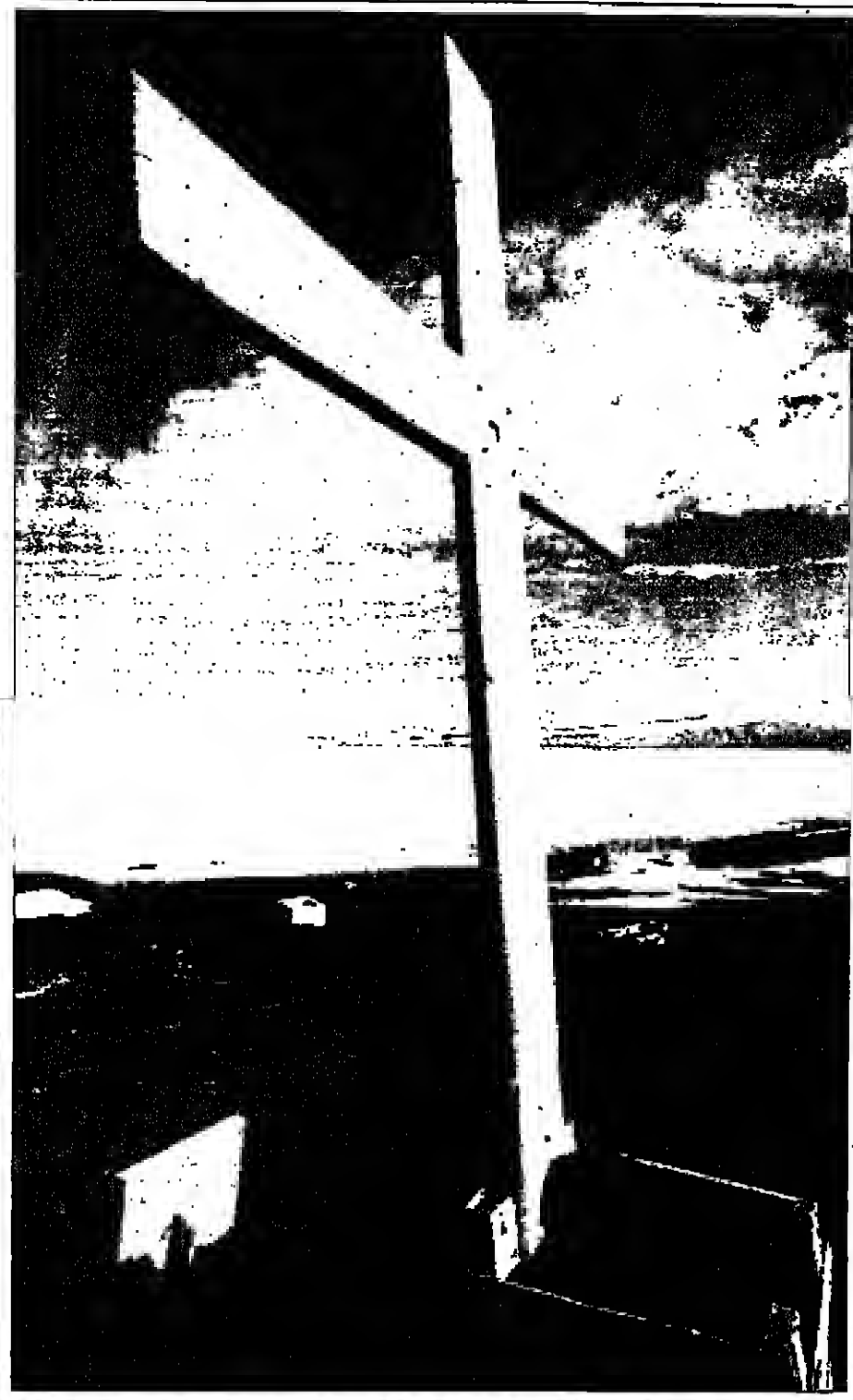
Cubans did get a taste of Christmas last year when Castro declared Dec. 25, 1997 a holiday as an "exceptional" measure in view of Pope John Paul II's visit to the island in January.

Today, "the need to mobilise hundreds of thousands of workers in December to cut by hand all the sugar cane no longer exists. Cutters and machines do much of the harvesting," the politburo of the Cuban

Communist Party said commenting on the decision to encourage celebration of the event.

Ortega acknowledged in his Christmas homily that it will be a challenge for the local Catholic Church to help Cubans refamiliarise themselves with the occasion.

"Among many of our brethren, there is a still a certain reluctance to celebrate the festival," Ortega said. "But we should wish everyone we meet, in the street, at home, a happy Christmas."



A wooden cross stands above Captain Robert Scott's famous Antarctica hut (in background) as a memorial to a member of British explorer Ernest Shackleton's Ross Sea Party group who died before World War I. Scott's hut is full of supplies and other artefacts left over from his ill-fated expedition in 1910-13 British Antarctic Expedition which saw Scott and some colleagues die in a bid to become the first men to reach the South Pole (Reuters photo)

Renewed fighting breaks out in strategic Congo town

POINTE-NOIRE, Congo (AFP) — Fighting between government troops and militias broke out again Tuesday in the strategic southwest Congo town of Dolisie, abandoned by many of its residents, people remaining there said by telephone.

"Light arms fire as well as heavy artillery shelling began again at daybreak," one resident told AFP from Dolisie, which lies on the Congo-Ocean rail line between the capital and the Atlantic port and oil terminal of Pointe-Noire.

Many civilians have already fled Dolisie, according to refugees who arrived here by train Tuesday morning after a 180-kilometre journey.

Monday, "shells fell on the town, in particular close to the railway station," one of the refugees said. Some 200 people walked more than 30 kilometres along the tracks to Ngodoungou to be able to board a goods train that brought them to Pointe-Noire.

Soldiers backing President Denis Sassou Nguesso Monday fought Cocoye militiamen loyal to toppled head of state Pascal Lissouba. In Brazzaville, the general staff said the battle claimed the lives of six rebels and two soldiers.

The rebels tried to take the railway station and airport — key communications links between the capital and the coast.

According to the military

command they also tried to take the arms depot in Dolisie, which was a stronghold of Lissouba backers before General Sassou Nguesso's men took over after a 1997 civil war.

Dolisie residents reported armed rebels entered the town Monday, were later pushed back by government troops and then returned Tuesday morning.

Lissouba's men faced opposition not only from government troops but also from Rwandan soldiers and Angolan troops who helped Sassou Nguesso seize back power from Lissouba in Oct. 1997.

These combined forces used artillery and although shelling died down overnight, residents said a large number of Dolisie's population of 40,000 had fled.

Another militia force, the self-styled Ninjas who fought for ex-premier and Brazzaville mayor Bernard Kolelas, have since August become active in the Pool region adjoining the capital Brazzaville, about 350 kilometres east of Dolisie.

Lissouba and Kolelas went into exile after losing the 1997 civil war, but their militiamen held regions of the southwest, notably Pool, which has seen heavy fighting since early December.

Tuesday, official television and the pro-government Radio Liberte accused Roman Catholic clerics of "lending aid to the leftovers of the Kolelas militia by pro-

viding them with furnishings and buildings."

The radio said "defrocked priests were promoting hatred and division instead of preaching the faith," a reference to statements by a captured Ninja who said he had been sheltered in a seminary in the capital.

"Those in charge of this seminary are not the only ones in the hands of the police," the radio said.

However, Congo's episcopal conference responded that "such a serious, lying accusation could discredit the Catholic church and endanger the lives of men of the church and afflicted people seeking refuge on religious premises."

The bishops also said in a statement that "the church has never been an accomplice in any action aimed at destabilising public institutions".

Heavy fighting took place in Pool for much of December, when the region was sealed off by government forces, many of them Sassou Nguesso's own Cobra militia and their Angolan allies.

Clashes also occurred in southwestern districts of the capital after what the government described as militia "infiltration". Many residents, who had already seen Brazzaville pounded in 1997 and 1993 fled these areas and have been slow to return.

The conflict has led humanitarian organisations to cite serious concerns for Congo.

Albright assures Yeltsin on Russia-U.S. ties

MOSCOW (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told Russian President Boris Yeltsin Tuesday that Moscow remained important to Washington and the two countries must not let their differences sour relations.

Albright and Yeltsin, who is in hospital recovering from a stomach ulcer, spoke by telephone for about 25 minutes on the second day of a three-day visit intended to heal rifts threatening Russian-U.S. ties.

"She had a good conversation with him," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters.

"She raised the importance of keeping the relationship in a position to resolve problems and not let one or another disagreement move the relationship off its central importance."

He made clear Albright had tried to ease Russian fears over U.S. plans to set up a new

national anti-missile defence system which could violate the Russian-U.S. Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM), seen as a cornerstone of the strategic balance.

"She went into some detail to explain the national missile defence issue, explaining that we remain committed to the ABM treaty, that no deployment decision has been made yet, that we want to work with you if it needs amending," Rubin said.

Albright and Yeltsin also discussed Russia's economic problems and Iraq, but not Kosovo, he said. The Kremlin confirmed the conversation had taken place but gave no details.

Leaders of both sides have issued optimistic statements following Albright's first day of talks with Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and others.

"The main thing is that we have similar strategic interests and that is exactly what we are going to base our contacts on," ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Ivanov as saying Tuesday before his second meeting with Albright. "We disagree on some points, but it is very important to find a compromise." But Albright's visit has been clouded by reports that a U.S. air attack on Iraq may have hit a residential neighbourhood, by news of fresh killings in Yugoslavia's Kosovo province and by differences over arms control and nuclear proliferation.

Moscow has yet to ratify the START-2 arms reduction pact and wants the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) to be redrawn to reflect the post-cold war military balance.

Albright addressed those concerns in her conversation with

Yeltsin, who Rubin said sounded strong after more than a week having treatment in Moscow's Central Clinical Hospital.

"On arms control, she said she wanted to make clear that we want to work closely with the Russians on the adaptation of the CFE treaty, want to move quickly to START-3 negotiations as soon as START-2 is ratified," Rubin said.

START-3 would be intended to set further reductions in nuclear weapons, beyond those stipulated in START-2.

Albright and Yeltsin also discussed their different approaches to Iraq. Rubin made no mention of any agreement.

"She said that while we agree on the goal of dealing with the danger (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein poses, we've got to work on the approach we take to that problem," he said. On the economy, Albright

made clear Washington and the International Monetary Fund would support new loans to Russia if it pushed ahead with reforms.

Albright also met regional governor Alexander Lebed and liberal leader Grigory Yavlinsky Tuesday. Both are likely to run for the presidency when Yeltsin's term ends in 2000.

A U.S. official said Monday that Albright had been struck by the number of issues worrying Russians she had met and had been asked if there was a change in U.S. policy towards Russia.

"The secretary replied in all meetings that she had come to understand the need to address this accumulation, how to lower the temperature of the rhetoric you hear and put issues that can become political footballs into a serious process of discussion," he said.

21 people killed in caste conflict

SHANKARBIGHA, India (AP) — Armed men believed to be members of an upper caste militia stormed into the houses of poor villagers in northern India, killing 21 people and wounding 12 others in a revenge massacre, police said Tuesday.

The killing in a rural district of Bihar, India's most undeveloped state, was part of a series of fatal clashes between gunmen working for the landowning class and communist-backed militias supporting land-

less workers.

"They surrounded the village and started forcing their way into several houses, just shooting blindly," said Joginder Paswan in Shankarbigha, a cluster of mud and thatch houses south of Patna, the state capital of Bihar.

Some people died in their sleep; others were dragged out of their houses and shot at close range, police official S.K. Bhadracharya said. "We were all having dinner and I

ran to hide when six or seven men rushed in," said Mahi Devi, four of whose family members were killed in the attack. "I am the only one left," she said, crying outside her house in a crowd of other grieving village women.

The village is in a remote area 680 kilometres east of New Delhi. The nearest paved road is a one-hour walk away.

The attack was seen as a retaliation for the killing of two people last week

in a nearby village and for seven more who were killed last November.

The conflict pits the Ranvir Sena, a strike force of upper caste families, against members of the Maoist Communist Centre, the most extreme of the leftist groups working with low-caste labourers.

Chief Minister Rabin Devi, who heads the state government of Bihar, denounced the killing and vowed to catch the killers. She offered 100,000 rupees (\$2,325) compensation to the

family of each victim.

More than 60 low-caste villagers were killed six kilometres away from Shankarbigha in November 1997 in the worst massacre so far recorded.

The caste conflict escalated early this decade when Marxist activists moved into rural Bihar to organise landless field hands, in a rebellion against the ancient traditions of caste that restrict a person's station in life and his occupation according to his birth.

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War slaves protest at Japan embassy in Jakarta

JAKARTA (R) — Scores of Indonesian men forced into wartime slavery by the Japanese military protested outside the Japanese embassy in central Jakarta Tuesday demanding compensation.

About 100 men, their wives and some widows gathered peacefully, waving flags and banners

demanding "compensation, not a handout".

"When the Japanese came, I was taken by force to become a romusha (forced labourer)," 81-year-old A. Targa bin Suma told Reuters.

"I was beaten and beaten." A small delegation was allowed into the embassy to discuss their

complaints with diplomats.

The Japanese held most of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945 during World War II, pushing millions of Indonesian men into military service and forced labour.

Hundreds of thousands were shipped overseas and never returned.

Jordan Times

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Facsimile: Editorial: 5696183, Advertising: 5693337

E-mail: jortimes@go.com.jo

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Nowhere without admission

THE RECENTLY concluded Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo provided a rare opportunity to heal wounds between Baghdad and other Arab capitals and put their relations on a better footing. There is no question that Iraq's plight and sufferings from the repeated military strikes against it and the imposition of a punitive sanctions regime cannot end without Arab reconciliation between Iraq and its immediate neighbours. So, when the Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf stormed out of the Arab ministerial meeting in protest over some of the language in the final communiqué, the main thrust behind the meeting and its principal objective appeared to have been thwarted and jeopardised.

Any talk of an Arab summit would remain wishful thinking as long as the preparatory steps being undertaken to smooth the road towards that necessary goal remain indecisive. It seems that Baghdad sought only two things from the Cairo meeting: the condemnation of the recent U.S. and British attacks on Iraq and the lifting of the sanctions, first by the Arab countries and then by the international community. When the first draft communiqué went beyond these points or glossed over them and called instead on Iraq to recognise its error in committing aggression against Kuwait, the Iraqi foreign minister exploded in anger and stormed out. The walkout signalled a dramatic failure in Cairo. Failure is obviously music to the ears of some major capitals.

Putting things in their proper perspective, the military strikes against Iraq are indeed condemnable, especially when they are not endorsed by the U.N. Security Council. The Iraqi plea for an immediate end to the nearly nine years of embargo must be heeded. Yet, at the same time, the Iraqi ruling regime committed a cardinal sin when it invaded and occupied another Arab country. Even if Iraq was wronged by Kuwait or other Arab Gulf states in one way or another, there is no legitimate excuse for committing an act of aggression against a neighbouring Arab country. Iraq would win the hearts of all Arabs including the leaders of the Arab Gulf countries if it would admit its fatal error of 1990. Acknowledgement of that fact would be viewed as an act of honour and intellectual and political courage and integrity. Such an admission would surely set the stage for genuine reconciliation between Iraq and other Arab countries as a whole and set the process of lifting the sanctions into motion.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz offered to exchange "apologies" with Kuwait in particular on the eve of the Cairo Arab ministerial meeting. This was a major step forward, but Iraq's national interests would be better served at this stage if Baghdad took the initiative and not condition it on an immediate quid pro quo from Kuwait or any other Arab government. Iraq's belligerent acts against Kuwait are unequalled in severity with any other hostile act that may have been taken against it from any other Arab side. A special healing process is prescribed.

Fortunately, the Cairo meeting ended partially successful when the final communiqué was amended to meet some of Iraq's demands. There was no mention of an Iraqi recognition of its blunder in the 1990 Gulf crisis, something that we continue to regret. Instead Iraq was called upon to cease all hostile acts against its Arab neighbours, a positive development, but still incomplete. On the other hand, the establishment of an Arab ministerial committee to follow up on the legitimate Iraqi quest for lifting the sanctions appears to be a half measure. Iraq is absolutely right in expecting much more forceful collective Arab actions. This major shortcoming could be rectified if an Arab summit were convened in the near future. There must be no Arab division on this issue of sanctions, and the Arab capitals should appear united on the urgent need to lift them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour's Oweib Rintawi said that for the first time since the second Gulf war, Arab foreign ministers made, almost unanimously, a unified stand, which was more progressive in dealing with the Iraq crisis. For well-known reasons, the ministers did not condemn the U.S.-British strikes, but they expressed their deep misgivings about using military means instead of diplomacy in dealing with Iraq. Rintawi said they demanded that the U.N. Security Council initiate relations with Iraq, in a manner that would uphold the international organisation's credibility and ensure proper implementation of the council's resolutions, he said. The ministers expressed their full solidarity with the Iraqi people in their suffering, and called for unified efforts to lift the embargo in accordance with the U.N. resolutions and a time-tabled programme for implementation accompanied by a comprehensive review, the writer added. They stressed their opposition against any attempts to harm Iraq's sovereignty, security, unity and interference in its internal affairs, he said. Iraq, which withdrew from the meeting, demanded a condemnation of the U.S. aggression and a call for the immediate lifting of the sanctions.

Al Dustour's Jihad Momani noted "clear extremism" in Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf's statements, especially regarding certain Arab countries. This is because, Momani claimed, the country has nothing to lose. Iraqi diplomacy, which used to be calm even during the most difficult of times, is now aggressive, and this is no coincidence, but a new way of political dialogue with parties that are considered enemies, according to Momani. Sahhaf went to Cairo knowing he would be among of 18 ministers who consider him guilty and, thus, Sahhaf had no choice but to be tough in his demands, said Momani. However, Sahhaf, who withdrew from the meeting, missed the fact that the U.N. Security Council differs from the Arab League, the latter being weak and unable to stand up to the five permanent members of the Council.

Washington Watch

The United States and the Israeli elections

Dr. James J. Zogby

THE ISRAELI elections are an issue of great concern in the United States, engaging policy-makers and important segments of the American Jewish community. For U.S. policy-makers the elections pose a serious dilemma, because as the campaign in Israel heats up, the Middle East peace process has been put on the backburner. This displeases the Clinton Administration both because they invested significant political capital in attempting to put the process back on track, and because they are acutely aware of the dangers posed by a stalled peace.

Although he signed the agreement at Wye, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appeared to have little interest in seeing the agreement implemented. No sooner had he returned to Israel upon completing the negotiations with the United States and the Palestinian Authority, than he began to add new conditions to and reinterpret the pact unilaterally.

Despite Netanyahu's rhetorical prevarications (as in "If the Palestinians will implement, I'll implement") no one in Israel or in the United States seriously believes him anymore. In fact, as if to make clear his refusal to implement the pact's most basic provisions, i.e. Israel's withdrawal from additional West Bank land, Netanyahu's election campaign has unfurled a new slogan for use against his Labour Party opponent Ehud Barak: "Barak will hand over Likud will keep."

In the face of this blatant obstructionism, the U.S. appears to be in a

quandary. On the one hand, it is no secret that the U.S. would prefer to see a new government elected in Israel, one that is committed to a comprehensive peace. There is, however, an obvious hesitation in making this preference public for fear that it will backfire and be used to incite Likud supporters.

Those in the United States who express this view point out two additional concerns. In 1996, the Clinton Administration showed preference for Labour's Peres over Netanyahu. They fear that not only did their intrusion into Israeli politics backfire, but it has also made the past two-and-one-half years of dealing with Netanyahu more difficult. Then, there is the issue of domestic U.S. politics.

American Jewish public opinion, while strongly supportive of the administration's peace efforts, is not of one mind in the matter of the U.S. publicly attacking the government in Israel. And the Republican majority in Congress has been especially clear about its support for Likud and its leader. That Republican majority and a number of Democrats as well would not hesitate, if pushed, to pass hostile legislation making the Administration's Middle East diplomacy even more difficult than it already is.

Despite this quandary, the Administration has not hesitated to make its views known. While in Israel and Palestine, President Clinton was confronted at each turn by Netanyahu's anti-peace rhetoric. In each instance, Clinton, while

refusing to respond in kind, did make a determined effort to firmly and pointedly reassert the fundamental principles underlying the peace process.

When, a few weeks ago, the Israeli Ambassador to Washington published an editorial denouncing the Palestinians for their failure to comply with the terms of the Wye Accords, he was rather sternly rebuked by the State Department's Spokesperson Jamie Rubin. Rubin, in no uncertain terms, stated that it is the Palestinians who have implemented most of what is required of them, and Israel who has not fulfilled its obligations.

And just last week, Vice President Al Gore, one of Israel's strongest supporters, gave an exceptionally balanced presentation of the Administration's goals in the Middle East peace process in a speech to a pro-Labour Party American Jewish organisation. The speech, which was criticised by a pro-Likud U.S. group for its "implicit criticism" of the Netanyahu government's policy, stated clearly that Wye must be implemented in full by both parties, "with no new conditions."

Together with these policy statements there are also other actions being pursued by the Administration designed to move the process forward during the Israeli election. A State Department team has just returned from a visit to the region where they made clear that they expect movement to continue on all phases of the agreement. Early next month the U.S.

Palestinian bilateral commission will meet in Washington to further cement ties and advance Palestinian economic and political concerns.

And the Administration is actively pushing for congressional passage of a supplementary aid package to Israel and the Palestinian Authority. That, it insists, at this point, will only be made available to the party or parties that implement their obligations outlined in the Wye Accord.

It is not only the Administration that is engaged. The American Jewish community is involved in activities related to the Israeli election as well.

For example, as in the past few elections, major American Jewish donors have played a significant role in funding Israeli candidates. In 1996, for example, more than \$8 million was sent from U.S. Jewish donors to Israeli parties and their candidates. This year, the amounts may be higher despite a new Israeli law that was designed to limit such outside funding.

Irving Moskowitz, the notorious right-wing provocateur (infamous for funding the tunnel opening and Ras al Amoud settlement) just visited Israel with a group of wealthy extremist U.S. Jews to pledge financial backing to hard-line candidates who oppose concessions to the Palestinians. Benny Begin, son of the former Prime Minister, has reportedly received \$1 million from Moskowitz to fund his right-wing challenge to Netanyahu.

Next week, the new Israeli centrist party leader Amnon Shahak

will be in the United States, ostensibly to speak to a few policy groups, but in reality to raise money for his campaign.

If U.S. money will fund the campaigns, then U.S. strategists will be directing them. Netanyahu has already retained his electoral guru Arthur Finklestein, a New York Republican who has managed a number of leading U.S. Republican campaigns. Labour's Barak has hired James Carville and Stanley Greenberg — the U.S. team that played a role in President Clinton's 1992 victory. It is interesting to note that in a weird chain of events, in the past few weeks the offices of five of Barak's campaign aids in Israel have been subjected to mysterious break-ins and robberies. During the same period, on two occasions, Stanley Greenberg's Washington offices were also broken into. All that was reported stolen in both instances were materials relating to the Barak campaign. In Israel this is being reported as a "Watergate"-style affair. In all of these ways there is significant U.S. involvement attempting to shape the outcome of this year's Israeli elections. The outcome of this election could be, of course, quite serious for the future of peace in the region. Hence the intense involvement of so many.

However, whether or not the outcome of the election will be positive or decisive given the fragmentation of Israeli politics and the intense discussions in Israeli society is another matter.



A May 4 declaration must be seriously considered

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is coming to Washington early next month with an offer he apparently thinks President Clinton cannot refuse.

He is reported willing to delay the much-touted declaration of Palestinian statehood promised next May 4 — the deadline set for the five-year interim agreements negotiated under the 1993 Oslo accords — in return for American (and European) promises to recognise Palestinian statehood before the end of the year. He would also want Israel to freeze all Jewish settlements and to implement the Wye accord, brokered personally by President Clinton last October but suspended last month by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Arafat believes simplistically that both the United States and Israel should welcome his gesture since this would primarily avoid marring the Israeli national elections on May 17. It was the bombing attacks inside Israel two years ago by Palestinian extremists that many observers believe contributed to the assumption of power by Netanyahu in a razor-thin national poll over the then Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

The Palestinians argue correctly that they have the right to take the mutual-recognition accord they have reached with Israel at Oslo, along with the U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, "to its logical destination — independence and statehood."

But Israel, under Netanyahu, has threatened to reoccupy Palestinian territory should the statehood threat be carried out by Arafat.

Faced with this serious dilemma, the Palestinians have four possible options. They can simply avoid any action, but this means they would be succumbing

to Netanyahu threats, a loss of face for the Palestinian leadership and a blow to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza as well as a triumph for the Israeli right.

The Palestinians can also shelve any action on May 4 until some future date, but some feel they would need an unattainable international consensus when it is time to set a new deadline.

A third option would be a mutual Palestinian-Israeli agreement to extend the deadline beyond the two-stage Israeli elections. However, Palestinian officials feel Israel has disqualified itself when its suspended implementation last month of the Wye Memorandum. This latest interim agreement called for immediate resumption of permanent-status negotiations, which were to be completed by May 4.

Their only remaining course of action is to declare statehood as has been promised repeatedly by the Palestinian Authority.

After discussing these options, Dr. Nasser Al Kidwa, the permanent observer of Palestine at the United Nations, cautioned that there must be "greater Palestinian consideration and serious thought ... for what can be done within the fourth option and not outside it."

The eloquent Palestinian representative told the Centre for Policy Analysis on Palestine last Friday:

"For instance, the facts and realities should be explained to the Palestinian people, to the Arab states, and to the rest of the world. We must build a Palestinian consensus, for this is no tactical matter. We must solidify the Arab front and we must rectify the current impression that the Palestinian side is threatening to take 'unilateral actions' and that the Palestinian side is just waiting for an opportunity to opt

out of the peace process."

Al Kidwa recalled that the Palestinians had in fact declared their independence in 1988, a step that was widely recognised by many nations. "As such, we are not starting from scratch."

He also urged that the Palestinians ought to reaffirm as "a matter of policy" their commitment to the peace process and take care "not to give the Israeli side any pretext for violent reaction."

Al Kidwa, who is the nephew of President Arafat, did not wish to go on record with his personal preference although it was clear that, short of a confrontational position, the Palestinian leadership can take other steps that could have a lasting impact.

A feature of the interim agreements is that they are *interim*; which means that the terms of both the Palestinian president and the Palestinian Legislative Council expire with the cessation of the interim accords on May 4.

Arafat ought to seriously weigh these significant features of the peace process that allowed the Palestinians to exercise self-determination for the first time in their lives. He, for example, could call for national elections for a new president of the Palestinian state — not authority — and a new parliament — not legislative council — sometime after June by which time the new Israeli leadership will be known.

There are crucial issues that remain to be settled with Israel, namely Jerusalem, refugees, water and borders. Under no circumstances should Israel be allowed to capitalise on what may be a rash Palestinian decision that could ultimately lead to nothing more than what has been described as "an updated banustan system" in part of the West Bank and Gaza.

LETTERS

Best wishes

To His Majesty King Hussein:

I CANNOT explain to you, how much happiness and joy I felt when I saw your return on television. My whole family jumped for joy, and my dad, who was mad at me (for some reason!) put on a smile like none before. At that moment I knew what happiness meant, and how valuable you are to Jordan, and to all the Jordanian citizens.

However, you are not only valuable to Jordan but to the world. I have noticed, that Your Majesty, a man known for peace, has not only carved your achievements into Jordanian hearts, but deep in to the hearts of all citizens of all countries. And to prove my words, you can observe people calling from all around the globe to congratulate you on your return, not only as a King, and as a ruler, but also as a guide to all of us, because from you we learn, and from you we will still learn the meaning of humanity and peace; your picture will always be in our hearts. It is true that I live outside Jordan, but only my body remains abroad, for my heart is in Jordan, my country. God bless you!

Ibrahim Baggili and family
United Arab Emirates

So much for human rights

To the Editor:

WHILE THE Western media focuses its attention on President Clinton's impeachment, Lewinsky's latest testimony before the Senate, and the International Olympic Committee bribery scandal, atrocities in Kosovo continue right under the nose of NATO and its alliance. The International community apparently have again remained divided on a joint strategy towards halting the conflict in Kosovo and preventing other similar conflicts from happening in the region causing further loss of civilian life and economic hardships.

On the other hand, a defiant President Milosevic seems to care less and less what the international community thinks of him and appears to totally ignore NATO's renewed threats of air strikes if fighting continues. In a political atmosphere where weak political will and indecisiveness prevail among the leaders of NATO and its alliance, such defiant conduct should not be surprising. The Balkan insurgencies, recently in Bosnia and now in Kosovo, clearly demonstrate the double standards masquerading under the umbrella of the New World Order; policies which are simply politically and geographically determined, and have nothing to do with human dignity. If economic sanctions, imposed on the Iraqi people for the past nine years, worked so well, and the recent bombings of Iraq fulfilled the military objectives of the Pentagon, why shouldn't similar Western action be adopted in the case of former Yugoslavia, and the people responsible for the genocide be brought to justice. Instead, we hear of U.S. rejection of calls for U.S. troops to join a peacekeeping force and Russia's refusal to back up any military action.

The events in Kosovo clearly show that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts, and that a dangerous war can be turned on and off just like a water tap to serve and pursue the ambitious political interests of individuals in power. It seems to me, that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its code for common standards for human dignity by which people of the world are supposed to live, have no value in the minds of those who rule the world today.

Mrs. Rumiana M. Nuseibeh

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

A nation of men who have seen their wives executed and their children's hands chopped off

By Alex Duval Smith

SPENT CARTRIDGES litter the entrance to Freetown's Connaught Hospital. They make a clinking sound as you walk. Inside, bodies litter the floor. Alive, or dying from machete or bullet wounds, the bodies groan.

Children call out "mamma" and women plead "sister" — the sight of a white woman denotes hope. And as I hold my pen to my notebook and look into a pair of pleading eyes, I realise that it is not a hand that is being held up to me, but a bloody bandaged stump on the end of a newly mutilated arm.

They arrived here by the truckload in the early hours of yesterday — children and women, mostly, from the poor districts of eastern Freetown. They are the victims of retreating killers in a country that is high on the adrenaline of violence.

The Nigerian-led intervention force, ECOMOG, has just retaken most of the capital city from the Revolutionary United Front rebels, who are fighting to remove the democratic government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

The rebels — they are known as such but are merely a ragbag of poisoned men — have been mutilating Sierra Leonean peasants for 18 months. But never until now have the citizens in Freetown been given the "long or short-sleeve" treatment — the choice of where your arm will be severed. The RUF knows only how to destroy, so as it flees it destroys whatever it can.

Andrew Caulker, aged 29, from Wellington, eastern Freetown, lies on one of the Connaught's rare hospital tables, his head bandaged. "I am a Jehovah's Witness, perhaps that is why they put a machete in my head and my arm," he said.

No one here understands what — apart from drugs and depravity — motivates the killers, many of them said to be children, to butcher their victims.

Mohammad Fofana, from Kissy, eastern Freetown, arrived with his four-year-old son, Abdul. "They came the day before yesterday. They killed my wife, Masiril Jabbe, by shooting her in the head and

they shot Abdul in the thigh.

"Later they came back and burnt the house down. They said it was because we were supporters of ECOMOG. I do not support anyone. I just want to save my life," said Mr. Fofana.

Troops from ECOMOG — the 15,000-strong West African intervention force — were bringing in injured people by the truckload yesterday, as they secured pockets of eastern Freetown. Major Kaya Tanko, heading the ECOMOG strike force, said: "We have secured 50 per cent of the eastern end of the city but our problem is the hills above Kissy. The rebels are hiding there. They come down at night to attack civilians and loot and burn their homes."

The Connaught Hospital yesterday received medical supplies — thought to be from a 3.5 tonne shipment from Britain — including saline drips, antibiotics and bandages.

Dr. Jihan Sandy — one of 20 physicians treating the thousands of injured — said: "We need more of everything. We also need doctors. We are doing bullet extractions on the spot. We do not even have enough antibiotics and bandages. We have not sleep for two days."

"For two weeks before that, we worked for the rebels, at gun point. When they invaded Freetown on January 6, they killed all the existing patients to make room for their own injured," said Dr. Sandy.

In this sick conflict, the world is standing by, and the British Royal Navy frigate HMS Norfolk, moored in Aberdeen Bay, is the most visible example.

The Royal Marines come ashore from time to time to assess what is going on in this diamond-rich former British colony. But they have decided to let Nigeria, aided by white mercenaries and the pro-Kabbah Kamajor militia, "finish the job" of flushing the rebels out of Freetown.

"Normally, in war, you give the enemy an escape route," a Royal Marine commando observed yesterday. "The Nigerians are not doing that," he added with apparent approval.



Three victims of Sierra Leone's civil war at Freetown's Connaught Hospital (file photo of Sierra Leone's civil war at Freetown's Connaught Hospital (file photo))

Today, a transport plane from the Department for International Development is due to arrive in Lungi, north of Freetown, with a cargo of unspecified aid.

What is not needed, despite reports to the contrary, is food. Rice and greens are on sale in the streets of Freetown. Even fish is returning — despite an ECOMOG ban imposed due to fears of rebel arms shipments.

What is needed, however, is medicine and surgeons. Most of the world's charities, including the Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres

have fallen out with ECOMOG after it accused them of lending communications equipment to the rebels. There are no foreign doctors in town and the British shipment of medical supplies appears to have been virtually used up.

Most of all though, Sierra Leone needs the world to remember — for a long-time to come — that this is a

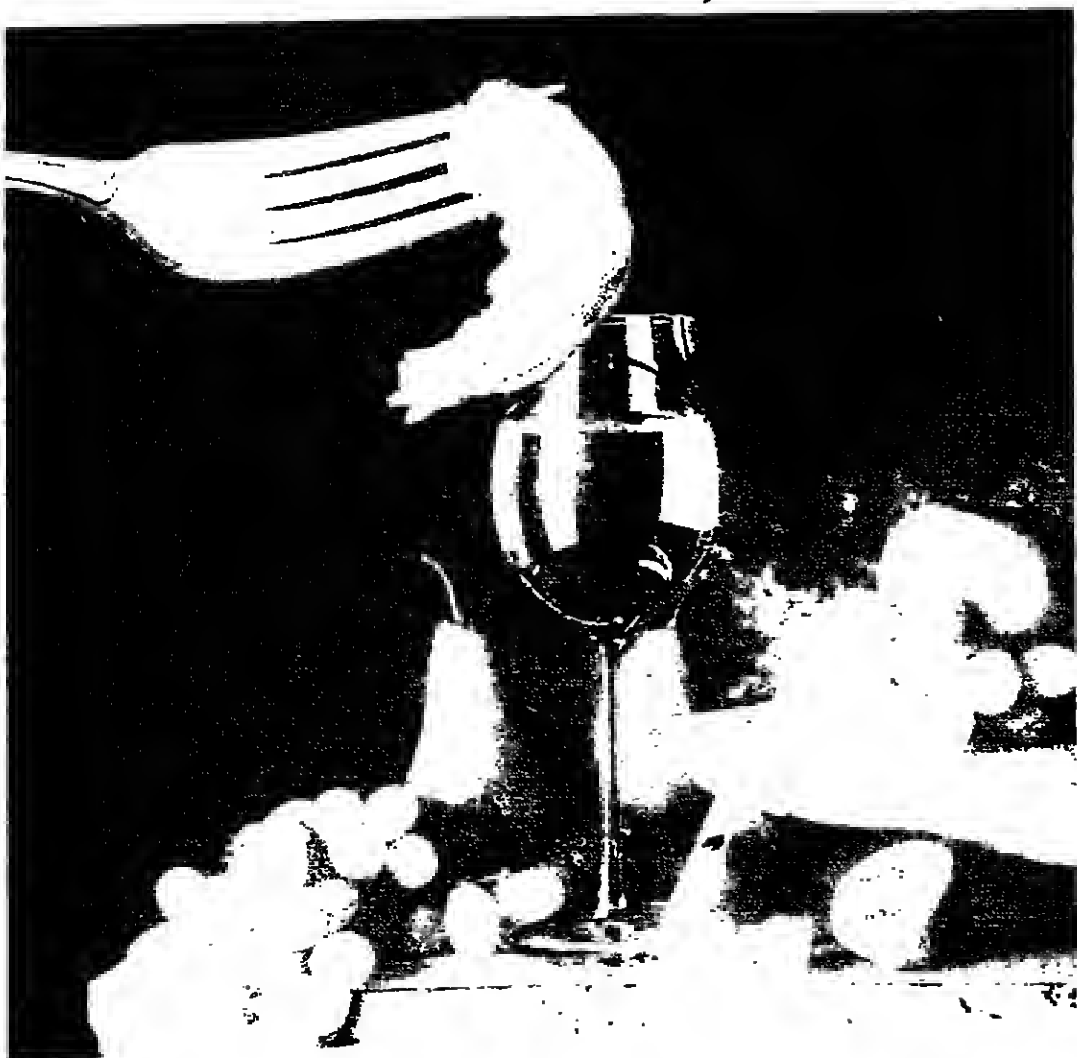
nation of husbands who have seen their wives executed in front of them and their children's hands chopped off.

Two doors up from the Connaught, the nurses' school has been transformed into a mortuary or, rather, a body dump. It is full — 1,140 bodies had been delivered when the counting stopped four

days ago. Yesterday, by the door — amid an overwhelming stench of hutchery — lay the bloated corpse of a headless man whose legs had been gnawed to the bone, presumably by dogs and crows.

— The Independent

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Lebanon urged to spell out economy plans

Andary said Lebanon should not fear raising income taxes to cut debt, a measure Hariri is worried would scare away capital.

"The primary concern for Gulf investors is not how high taxation is. They end up paying much higher margins than the 10 per cent tax in Lebanon when they invest in the West. They want a friendly environment and easy to follow rules and procedures," he said.

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0801	2 59:12	0 77:11	0 17:53
0802	2 35:51	0 43:44	0 10:52
0803	1 00:00	1 21:59	0 29:52
0804	2 51:28	1 00:00	0 24:44
1 12	2 32:28	4 05:09	1 30:00
0806	2 11:59	8 19:55	23 03:52

litical policy." Business leaders are not so sure.

"I don't know what to think. The devaluation of the real against the dollar should have stayed at between 1.50 and 1.60. No one was asking for anything more," said Mauricio Costin, director of Sao Paulo's powerful Federation of Industries (FIESP).

"We are asking when and at what level the real will stabilise. I know, from personal experience, that when the dollar goes up a lot it is very difficult to make it come back down," Costin said.

Costin pointed out that Brazilian companies are also paying back Eurobond loans, some worth billions of dollars, which is putting pressure on the real.

FIESP, whose members create roughly 50 per cent of Brazil's gross domestic product, warned against steep price hikes.

"Businesses should not peg their products to the dollar, especially

since September, and 58 billion fled the country in January alone.

"In just four days in January Brazil lost 56 billion in reserves. We had to react, and so the government had to move quickly to float the currency," Lopes explained.

Presidential spokesman Sergio Amarel tried to reassure Brazilians Monday, echoing President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's statements that this grim period will soon give way to a positive future.

"You have to understand that the decision to float the currency was precisely to avoid a run on our reserves," he said. "The only silver lining in the gloom over Brazil is that a devalued real means cheaper and therefore more competitive exports."

"How to benefit from these increases without creating a less and less desirable inflation — that's the question," he said.

[illegible]

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR				
CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN				
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESSIBILITY NOR PUBLICATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY SPECIES OF MISTAKES				
DEPOSIT INTEREST PRICES				
CBLJA				
CURRENCY	T M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	5.5800	4.8724	41.100	4.7100
EUROPEAN MARK	2.5000	6.2800	6.7800	5.4700
GERMAN MARK	2.5000	6.2800	6.7800	5.4700
FRANCE FRANC	1.7100	2.7000	3.6000	3.0000
SWITZERLAND FRANC	2.5000	2.7000	2.9600	2.9000
NETHERLAND GUILDER	1.7300	1.7300	1.3700	1.4375
ITALY LIRA*	2.5000	2.5000	0.0000	0.0000
EURO				

WORLD STOCK MARKETS						PRECIOUS METALS		
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSING	CHANGE				
FRANKFURT	DAX	4282.42	5019.39	-76.83	GOLD	AMK	BID	
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	3439.50	3738.52	-23.02	METAL	287.45	287.90	
LONDON	FT-100 INDEX	5392.90	6225.30	-114.43	SILVER	5.10	5.16	
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTRIAL	3126.58	3126.58	0.00	PLATINUM	323.50	324.50	
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	686.06	565.75	2.31				
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	728.51	704.69	1.23				
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1223.96	1223.13	0.84				
TOKYO	NIKKEI 225	14208.51	14184.40	14.11				
PARIS	CAC 40	4222.80	4019.20	21.41				
FRANKFURT	COMMODITY INDEX	60.125	60.492	1.56				

Peanuts

QUICK, MARCIE, SHE'S CALLING ON ME! GIMME THE ANSWER! HURRY! HURRY! HURRY!

YES, MA'AM... WELL, LET ME THINK ABOUT IT. THIS IS ONE OF THOSE PROBLEMS THAT REQUIRES REAL THOUGHT...

SIXTEEN... SIXTEEN!!

Andy Capp

TIME GENTLEMEN, PLEASE!

I'VE JUST PHONED FOR A CAB FOR YOU. I'LL PAY ANYTHING TO GET YOU OFF THE PREMISES.

IT'S HERE NOW, ANDY.

NO, THANKS, JACK. I REFUSE TO TRAVEL WITH ANYONE WHO DRIVES AS FAST AS HE MUST HAVE DONE. SAME AGAIN, PLEASE.

Mutt'n' Jeff

HEY JEFF, LOOK! LISTEN TO THIS LETTER WE JUST GOT!

DEAR MUTT AND JEFF— JUST A FEW LINES TO LET YOU KNOW HOW WONDERFUL I THINK YOU TWO DOGS REALLY ARE! YOU ARE MY FAVORITE COMIC CHARACTERS—

I GET THE NEWSPAPER EVERY DAY AND THE FIRST THING I TURN TO IS MUTT AND JEFF.

TO ME YOU ARE REAL PEOPLE! YOU ARE HUMAN, CLEVER AND LOVABLE! I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO WITHOUT YOU!

M-M-M-M

I HOPE SOMEDAY SOON YOU WILL JOIN ME HERE. I KNOW YOU WILL— YOURS— H.C. BONHAPPE

P.S. PLEASE EXCUSE WRITING—I HAD TO USE A TOOTHPICK— THEY DON'T LET US HAVE ANYTHING HARD OR SHARP HERE

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

"Life at the office is getting worse.
All the backstabbing is done
by computer now."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four jumbles,
one letter to each square,
to form four ordinary words.

TEFAC

ROGUD

GRAVEA

CHOROB

Answer here: A

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THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argriton

Now arrange the circled letters to
form the surprise answer, as sug-
gested by above cartoon.

IT

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Yesterday's Jumbles: MOUNT LIGHT VERMIN JIGGER
Answer: Why the old timer envied the young

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Department of Statistics will start issuing quarterly economic bulletin effective early next year

****IN ORDER** to speed up the issuance of economic statistics which usually take long time to be released in an annual bulletin, the Department of Statistics will be able to issue from the end of 1999 a quarterly bulletin that will include the economic growth figure and the date of the national income accounts, the department's new director general has announced.

"This process will greatly facilitate the work of decision-makers, researchers and analysts who are interested in studying the course of economic growth," said Hussein Shakhateh, the new head of the Department of Statistics. He indicated that the data for the last quarter of this year will be ready by March of next year.

Shakhateh referred to the large discrepancy in the growth figures which appeared last year between the estimated and actual figures stressing that the mistake was not a miscalculation by the department but a wrong estimation of a committee from the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Jordan, the Ministry of Planning and the Department of Statistics.

Noting that his department was the one that was behind unveiling the correct data, Shakhateh emphasised that the coming methodology by the department will ensure that each statistical bulletin include a degree of trust and accuracy of the information. "Talk that the figures of the Department of Statistics are wrong and not accurate is unacceptable especially when our studies follow the scientific methodology adopted internationally and there is no way for mistakes," he stressed.

The director general highlighted the constant need of the decision-maker for a figure to be used as a base. "Such a figure

would reflect on the type of the decision and policies that will be followed," he said. "If the information is accurate, then the decision will be accurate and the results good."

Shakhateh added: "No party can issue statistics as accurate as the department which uses modern scientific means and has wide experience in this regard." He insisted that the methods used by the department are the right ones which are followed internationally noting that the difference between figures issued by the department and those issued by other parties are due to different concepts and definitions used. "They (other parties) do not have the accumulated experience of the department which is the sole specialised and responsible party for collecting data according to the law," Shakhateh said.

Asked about the reasons behind the discrepancy between the rate of unemployment issued by the Centre of Strategic Studies and the rate issued by the Department of Statistics, Shakhateh explained that the centre conducted a single study in 1996 and used terminology different from that used by the department. The centre also used one day as a reference for study whereas the department uses one whole week as a reference from the date of the interview.

"As such, the rate of unemployment is higher when the one day period is used as a base," he said noting that most countries use the one week period to measure unemployment. Shakhateh concluded by pointing out that the rate should be used carefully as the 15 per cent rate is now much larger than the 20 per cent rate eight years ago because the size of labour differs from one year to another (Al Dustour).

Study: People are working more and enjoying it less

ANAHEIM, California (AP) — Bulletin from the job front: People work more than they want to.

A new study of two-career couples finds that the number of hours they spend on the job has risen substantially in the past two decades. And they don't like it.

"People are working longer hours, and it's not because they want to," said Martin Clarkberg, a Cornell University sociologist.

Clarkberg and other researchers presented their latest findings on the work-family time squeeze at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Both sexes feel stressed by the competing demands of job and home. But in some ways, the situation can seem worse for women, said Clarkberg, because they often have to choose between working full time or not at all.

The reason: Too few part-time jobs for women with families, and the ones that exist often pay poorly and do not offer health insurance or other benefits.

Clarkberg's research showed that actually, both men and women would often like to work something less than a standard 40- or 50-hour week.

Her results were based

surveys of 4,554 married couples. They were questioned in 1988 and 1994 as part of the National Study of Families and Households.

Among the findings: — 43 per cent of men and 34 per cent of women said they work more hours than they want to. The number is smaller for women only because one-quarter of them don't have paying jobs.

— Half of all the women and 20 per cent of the men said they wished they could work part time. In fact, though, just 20 per cent of the women and six per cent of the men did this.

— Only about 10 per cent of couples said they prefer the traditional roles of the man as breadwinner and woman as full-time housewife. Yet 25 per cent of the couples fit this mold.

— Just 14 per cent of couples said they want both spouses to work full-time. However, twice that number actually do.

Part of the problem, said Phyllis Moen, another Cornell sociologist, is that the job market is still largely geared toward the traditional pattern of working full-time or not at all — a setup suited best to working husbands and stay-at-home wives.

caught in a time squeeze," said Moen. "They have two jobs, one at work, one at home."

Home computers, e-mail, faxes and other innovations theoretically should make it possible for people to be more flexible about their work hours. But the researchers said the technology often seems to result in people working still more.

"People can work anywhere, anytime, but they can also work everywhere, all the time," said Moen.

Other data collected by Clarkberg shows that when couples' work hours are added up, they are spending more time on the job than ever before. Between 1972 and 1994, couples' total average working time has increased by seven hours a week.

Another study by Robert Drago of the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee examined teachers' hours to see if they are really as cushy as they are sometimes portrayed.

He found that while teachers are required by their contracts to work an average of 6 1/2 hours a day, they actually average just under 10 hours when their extra hours at school, commuting time and homework are added in.

Holidays still beckon despite economic turmoil

MADRID (R) — The appeal of a holiday abroad is still strong — even during an Asian economic crisis.

Figures released by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Tuesday showed that the industry has proved resilient in the face of economic turmoil, and that the number of international tourists grew in 1998 despite economic troubles in Asia.

The Madrid-based organisation said international tourist arrivals grew by 2.4 per cent worldwide in 1998 — the same growth rate as the previous year — despite a sharp fall from Asia's economic crisis which depressed travel throughout that region.

"Results for 1998 demonstrate two major aspects of tourism activity, its vulnerability to external economic and political forces and its great resilience in the face of adversity," said Francesco Frangialli, secretary-general of the organisation.

Tourism destinations in Asia and the Pacific were hardest hit by the crisis, he said. The organisation's figures show international arrivals in the region dropped 1.2 per cent and revenues fell by nearly four per cent — a loss of \$2.8 billion.

Frangialli said the Asian economic crisis would continue to have an impact on intra-regional travel, though most of the fall in arrival numbers from within the region would be offset by more visitors from further away who would take advantage of lower rates.

Asia is likely to face further setbacks for the next few years, but is still expected to be a driving force of tourism in the long term.

Chiao, which the WTO

predicted last year would become the world's top holiday destination by 2020, is still expected to hold the top place in that year.

"We have recently revised our figures to include the impact of the economic crisis in Asia," said Frangialli. "The general idea is that the impact will be felt for the next two to three years. But barring any major unforeseen accident, the previous trend should remain as predicted."

He said that by 2020 China will not only be the world's largest tourist destination, but will also account for a large number of tourists visiting other countries.

Europe remained the top destination for tourists in 1998, with an increase of three per cent in arrivals. Frangialli said data showed the World Cup football championship in France and the Expo world fair in Portugal helped boost tourism.

But Spain was the big European winner, with arrivals jumping 10 per cent and receipts climbing 11 per cent.

The increase made Spain the world's number two destination for the first time, overtaking the United States in arrivals but still behind France.

Africa was the fastest growing tourism region in 1998, with international arrivals increasing by 7.5 per cent.

Regional growth for the Americas was held down to 1.4 per cent in arrivals because of a reduction in international tourism to the United States, which accounts for three quarters of the regional total.

Part of the drop in U.S. arrivals was due to a fall in the number of Asian tourists and a reduction in arrivals from neighbouring Mexico and Canada.

Tourism to Israel falls by four per cent

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel failed to halt the drop in tourist numbers in 1998, with four per cent fewer visitors than in 1997, the Central Office of Statistics has announced.

Some 2,198,800 visitors, almost all of them tourists, arrived in the country last year.

The 1997 figure of around 2,295,000 was already down three per cent on 1996, itself seven per cent

less than 1995.

The number of nights foreign tourists spent in hotels in 1998 fell by five per cent in comparison with 1997.

Both Israel and the Palestinians are counting on an upsurge of tourists for the Millennium, with between four and five million Christian pilgrims expected to visit the Holy Land for the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ.

S. Korea wasted \$16b on defending currency

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea wasted a total of \$16 billion between late 1996 and February of 1997 in a futile attempt to defend its currency, a government report has said.

The Central Bank of Korea spent \$6.9 billion in the second half of 1996 and \$9 billion in early 1997, the finance and economy ministry said in the report to parliament.

The money included commitments to forward contracts, the ministry said.

As a result, it said, foreign exchange reserves fell sharply from \$33.2 billion at the end of 1996 to \$29.7 billion at the end of February 1997.

The won lost 8.2 per cent against the U.S. dollar in 1996 and an additional 2.9 per cent to March from the beginning of 1997 as South Korea's current account deficit continued to swell and the greenback remained strong, it said.

Ivanov said that payments in kind amounted

Gazprom gets more cash but still not enough

MOSCOW (AFP) — Gazprom, which produces 94 per cent of Russia's natural gas, received more payments in cash last year than in 1997. Interfax news agency has said, quoting the company's security chief Edward Ivanov.

Ivanov said that payments in kind amounted

to 33.5 per cent of the total in 1998, compared with 50.5 per cent the year before. Cash payments rose from 12 per cent to 18.2 per cent but were still inadequate.

Like all Russian companies Gazprom participates in the cash-strapped country's barter economy, but is owed enormous amounts in unpaid bill by the government.

Last month the firm announced losses of 45 billion roubles (1.69 billion euros, \$2 billion) in 1998, because of the fall in the value of the ruble and the financial crisis in August.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19)

Every place you look, another question pops to mind. With Mars, your ruler planet, now in Scorpio, you're probing more deeply than usual. You want to find out what's beneath the surface. What you're learning could increase your wealth as well as your area of influence. Don't worry where this quest will lead you. Live in the inquiry.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You could get an unexpected legacy today from an unusual source. It looks like this income is generated by words rather than deeds. You're a natural editor. In fact, you could make your living with words, especially right now. The words you say could greatly impact the amount of money you make, so choose them carefully.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Did you know it's possible to get a job overseas, teaching people how to speak English? There are also places to study the native language. There are people to meet, who will lead to other people and other adventures. You don't have to know how. That's the least of your worries. You can figure that out as you go along. Get started.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Your friends know how warm and loving you are. You're someone they can go to when they need to talk. You can be trusted to keep secrets, but don't let them weigh you down. Let them float right out of your mind. This could take a little practice, but it's a habit worth acquiring. Don't do it by telling anybody, however.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) There are a lot of ideas being tossed around today, but something's lacking. It'll be obvious to you. The others are just too much in their heads. You're more practical and pragmatic. Even if the others have more degrees than you do, it looks like you're the one with the common sense. Speak up before they do something ridiculous.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You can see the change that needs to be made, but can't do it all by yourself. It'll take teamwork, and effort on your part to whip this ragtag group into a team. Confusion reigns because nobody has a plan. That's where you come in. If you do nothing more than set priorities, you could make the difference between success and failure.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You

always have a way with words, but today you're absolutely astounding. You'll come up with the winning answer. You're glib and polished, chic and debonair — but watch out. Know what you're getting into before you agree to anything, and don't say something thoughtlessly that damages another person. Errors like that are hard to erase.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) Mars, one of your ruling planets, has just gone into your sign. Mars symbolises the warrior, and Scorpio is the strategist. That instinct should serve you well today in a business deal. Someone has the very thing you need, but don't let on right away. Offer a price that's more in your favour, and see what happens.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're a fierce competitor when you feel like it, and you just might feel like it today. Other people will be surprised to see you out there on the court, waiting to smash your opponent's best shot right back. You've got what it takes and more. You've got a surprise move nobody will expect. Get out there and wow 'em.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You may believe that the harder you work the richer you'll get, but today it's more important how smart you work. Reading the paperwork could be absolutely pivotal. You need to know what's going on. What's the competition doing? How's the market look? What's opening up? What's shutting down? Do the homework.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Don't spend time daydreaming about something attractive while you're on the clock. You have a conflict today between love and money, so don't play at love when you're supposed to be making the money. If you're working together, the dilemma becomes even more intense, and more potentially scandalous. Watch out.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Your fantasy life is always rich, and today it's almost like having four helpings of pecan pie in a row. It's wonderful at first, but after a while you might be a little sick to your stomach. In other words, cool it or you could make yourself into a nervous wreck. Just wait. It'll be much easier to tell fact from fiction tomorrow.

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JO. KUWAIT BK	1.700	1.690	-0.59%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.750	1.730	-1.14%
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JO. INVEST. & FIN. BK	1.330	1.350	+1.50%
BET ELMAL	0.850	0.890	+4.71%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.850	0.830	-2.35%
BANKS INDEX			
	282.450		point = -0.78%
INSURANCE			
AHLIA INS	1.040	1.090	+4.81%
INSURANCE INDEX			
	126.030		point = +0.22%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.790	1.730	-3.35%
REPAIR ELECTRICITY	1.800	1.800	0.00%
VEHICLES OWNERS	2.580	2.580	-0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.840	0.860	+2.38%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.910	0.910	0.00%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVEST. & E	1.880	1.880	-0.00%
UNION LAND DEV	0.870	0.870	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.200	1.170	-2.50%
SERVICES INDEX			
	111.890		point = -1.17%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.800	3.790	-0.26%
PHOSPHATE	2.190	2.160	-0.00%
ARAB POTASH	4.140	3.980	-3.86%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	11.060	11.000	-0.54%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRICU	1.120	1.080	-3.57%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.180	3.120	-1.89%
CERAMIC IND	1.200	1.210	+0.83%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.260	1.240	-1.59%
NTL STEEL	0.500	0.500	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	5.730	5.600	-2.27%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.870	0.860	-1.14%
JO. STEEL	0.960	0.960	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.950	1.900	-2.56%
CHLORINE	1.220	1.220	-0.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.410	0.410	0.00%
NTL IND	0.360	0.350	-2.78%
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EL-ZAY	1.300	1.290	-0.77%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.740	0.720	-2.70%
IND. RESOURCES	0.470	0.460	-2.13%
NEW CAPLES	0.530	0.530	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.720	0.710	-1.39%
INDUSTRY INDEX			
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Australians rise to Ecuador's Lapentti

MELBOURNE (R) — The Australian Open found an unlikely new hero on Tuesday when Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador — a distant 91st in the world rankings — battled to a five-set win over seventh seed Karol Kucera of Slovakia.

Unseeded Lapentti, who had failed progress beyond round two of his 11 previous grand slam appearances, beat Kucera 7-6 6-7 6-2 0-6 8-6 to reach the semifinals.

Lapentti's victory set him up for a last-four showdown with Thomas Enqvist after the unseeded Swede overcame Swiss Marc Rosset 6-3 6-4 6-4 to underline his status as clear favourite.

It also guaranteed that only one seed, either Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov or American Todd Martin can make the last four. They play each other in the quarter-finals on Wednesday.

"I'm just so happy that I don't know what to say. It's a great feeling," Lapentti said.

"Thomas is playing great tennis so I'll just have to go for it. I mean, I'm in the semis and I'm just going to fight my heart out."

By contrast, the women's draw is still packed with leading players, although American Venus Williams and Belgium's Dominique Van Roost howed out in the quarter-finals.

Van Roost fell 6-3 7-6 to unseeded Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo while Williams was blown away 6-4 6-0 by World No. 1 Lindsay Davenport.

Williams stormed off court without shaking the umpire's hand after a crucial call went against her when some of her hair beads fell on to court.

"This has never happened to me before," Williams screamed at umpire Denis Overberg. "This is out of control."

The brash 18-year-old fifth seed had been unable to dent on Davenport's powerful all-round game and was serving at 2-0 down in the second set when she lost some beads.

Overberg heard her that if it happened again she would lose the point —



Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador blasts a double-handed return to seventh-seeded Karol Kucera of Slovakia during their quarter-final match at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne on Tuesday. Lapentti is leading 7-6 (4), 6-7 (6), 4-1 with play continuing (AFP photo)

just as points can be deducted if players hats fall off. At break point in the same game, a handful of beads did rattle on to court as she served and Davenport was handed the game.

"I didn't think it was a very fair call," said Williams, who has worn beads to her hair for six years.

"It's not an incident that occurs frequently and I've never had any such treatment from any other umpire at any other match."

But Williams conceded: "I didn't lose that match

because my beads fell off, I lost it because I didn't play very well."

U.S. Open champion Davenport showed little sympathy for Williams and said the rattling beads had annoyed her.

"They are the rules we live by," she said. "If I wore a hat and the same thing happened to me, I'd lose the point."

Davenport has lost to Mauresmo in a clay-court encounter in France and said she was looking forward to meeting the muscular 19-year-old Frenchwoman again.

Mauresmo, World No.

29, fired booming serves and powerful ground strokes that 11th seed Van Roost, despite her best efforts, could not counter.

Rosset fared little better, the 1992 Olympic champion standing by helplessly as world number 21 Enqvist blasted 15 aces.

Enqvist dominated a match graced with long rallies and deep baseline shots, breaking Rosset's serve at crucial stages of each set.

"When I step on court I've been feeling like I could possibly beat anybody in the world," Enqvist said.

Rosset also clocked up serves at around 200 kph an hour but lacked Enqvist's accuracy and consistency to lose in 100 minutes.

Such is the paucity of grand slam form in the final stages of the tournament that Enqvist is now 2-1 favourite even though he has never made it past the quarter-finals in any of the four major championships.

But the loss of the big names has been countered by the rise of some of the lesser known characters.

Lapentti, from Guayaquil, has become a crowd favourite because of his never-say-die approach to the game.

He has reached the semifinals the hard way, beating two seeds and winning four of his five matches in the fifth set.

Even his other match went four sets.

Against Kucera, he was in devastating form, serving powerfully, chasing down every ball and constantly wrong-footing the Slovak with his groundstrokes.

Lapentti suffered a major lapse of concentration in the fourth set, and appeared to have given up on the match, but fought

back in the fifth as if there had never been a problem.

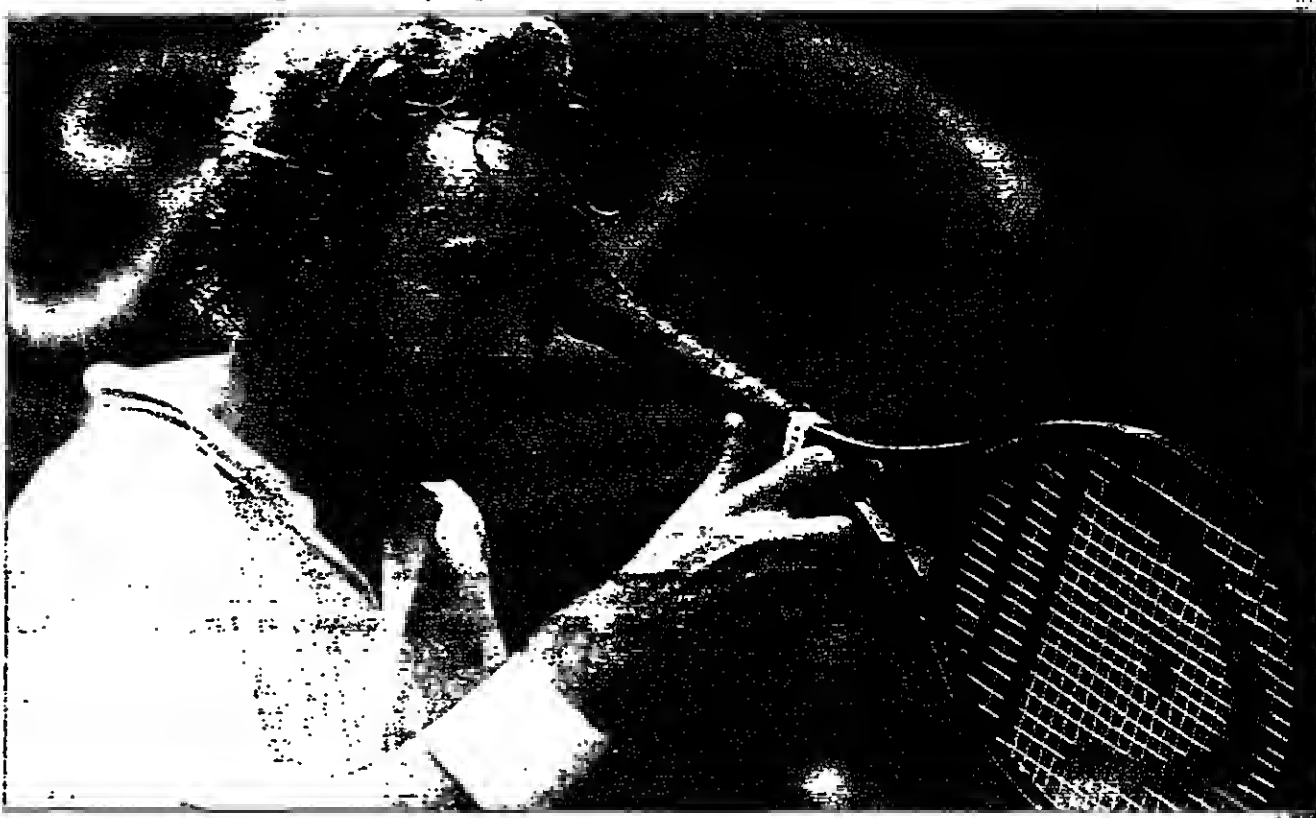
The Ecuadorian broke Kucera to go 5-3 up in the final set but was broken back to set up a grandstand

finish. Lapentti became the lowest-ranked semifinalist at the Australian Open since Pat McEnroe won through in 1991 ranked 114.

"I just thought that I had to take some chances, take a big risk and just try to come out strong in the fifth set, and it worked out pretty good," he said.



Fifth seeded Venus Williams of the U.S. follows through on a return to compatriot Lindsay Davenport during her quarter-final match at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne on Tuesday. Top seeded Davenport advanced to the semifinals with a 6-4, 6-0 win (AFP photo)



Marc Rosset of Switzerland appears to look into the barrel of his racket handle while spinning it during his quarter-final match with Thomas Enqvist at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne on Tuesday. Rosset went down in straight sets Enqvist 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 (AFP Photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Germans face April trial

ESSEN, Germany (AFP) — Four Germans will go on trial here in April for incidents relating to an attack on French police officer Daniel Nivet during the World Cup, it was revealed on Tuesday. The four unnamed defendants, aged between 23 and 30, are in custody and have been accused of attempted murder and an aggravated breach of the peace. Nivet was in a coma for six weeks after the incident in the French town of Lens on the day of the match between Germany and Yugoslavia. The trial could last until September. Two men were also arrested in France.

Platini's turn to speak in Italian drugs investigation

TURIN, Italy (AFP) — Former France and Juventus favourite Michel Platini was interviewed on Monday by Turin prosecutor Raffaele Guariniello as part of the ongoing investigations into drugs in Serie A. Guariniello has interviewed dozens of players since last summer and spent some two hours quizzing Platini, who led Juve to victory in the 1985 European Cup and who starred in the France team which won the 1984 European Championship. In all, Platini, who was president of the France 98 World Cup organising committee, spent five seasons in Italy with the "Zebras". Afterwards he told journalists he believed that "doping is a question for the players and the doctors. I don't believe it goes on at the club level. But anyone who transgresses must be punished." He said he had told Guariniello that "football should clean up its act on its own" although he added that "the state should punish the guilty." Platini said in his view "the doctors who distribute the products and the sellers should be brought to justice."

Tuta claim sparks new Italia match-fixing probe

ROME (R) — The Italian football federation (FIGC) has opened a match-fixing inquiry into last Sunday's Serie A match between Venezia and Bari, local media reported on Tuesday. Venezia won the match in Venice 2-1 but Brazilian striker Tuta, who scored the winner in the last minute, claimed he had been told by team mates not to try too hard and to play for a draw. "Yes, (Filippo) Maniero told me that 1-1 was good," Tuta told the Gazzetta dello Sport daily newspaper. "He told me before the match (that led to the goal)." Tuta said he pretended not to understand and did not reply. "I wasn't happy about it because I wanted to score," he said. "Afterwards I didn't talk to anyone."

Italy to limit digital TV coverage

ROME (R) — The Italian government intends to put a 60 per cent ceiling on the amount of soccer that can be broadcast by a single digital pay-TV operator as a way of guaranteeing competition, Communications Ministry under-secretary Vincenzo Vita said on Tuesday. "The 60 per cent ceiling is a reasonable limit to the formation of monopolies," Vita said on Italian radio. It was unclear exactly how the 60 per cent would be measured. The government has been alarmed by plans of media baron Rupert Murdoch to use his proposed Italian satellite pay-TV venture to grab all the rights to show league soccer.

Sporting grievance for lost points

LISBON (R) — Sporting Lisbon have asked fans to wear mourning clothes at their next home match in protest at a string of refereeing decisions the club claims has ruined their championship hopes. The club flag will be flown at half-mast and officials will don black armbands for Sunday's game against Academica. Sporting said poor refereeing had cost them at least 10 points. At present, they are nine points behind leaders Porto. The Lisbon club have objected to match officials before. Earlier this season they offered to pay for foreign referees at their matches. The latest complaint followed an admission by referee Jorge Coroado, in charge of the 2-2 draw at Chaves at the weekend, that his mistakes probably cost Sporting victory. Sporting had a goal disallowed and two penalty appeals refused.

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During his fight with Alexander, Mendy was hit by a powerful punch in the eighth round.



During his fight with Alexander, Mendy was hit by a powerful punch in the eighth round.

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Sports

Out-of-competition doping tests imminent in soccer

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) —

The head of FIFA's medical committee Tuesday warned soccer clubs Tuesday that out-of-competition drugs testing is imminent.

"It could happen as of today, let everybody be warned," Dr. Michel D'Hooghe said in an interview.

D'Hooghe said urine tests could determine the use of EPO, a synthetic product at the center of a doping scandal in Italy since last summer.

"It is a very novel technology," he said. "It is detectable in urine samples but the process is very elaborate, so we will most likely do it on an individual basis."

D'Hooghe's comments came a week before a Feb. 24 world conference on doping at the International Olympic Committee headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. The world soccer federation is expected to come under pressure for not backing the IOC's proposal for a minimum two-year suspension for the use of major performance enhanc-

ing drugs.

D'Hooghe has pushed through a system of unannounced out-of-competition drug tests because soccer's long and heavy schedule increases the lure of drugs. The world's top players face up to 80 matches a year, while the medical limit should be about half that.

Under the system, a FIFA testing team will arrive unannounced and make checks whole teams, whether they are in training camp or at a match, he said.

Doping was considered a minor problem in soccer until FIFA banned Argentina's Diego Maradona for 15 months after he tested positive for a cocktail of banned stimulants during the 1994 World Cup.

The World Cup in France passed without any drug controversies but scandals started last summer when AS Roma coach Zdenek Zeman suggested doping was widespread in Italy's Serie A. EPO, a synthetic hormone that stimulates the production of oxygen-carrying red blood cells, became

a household word.

D'Hooghe is convinced that a Scandinavian system can detect the drug, a key step in controlling its use. The system can show how the natural EPO elements in the body decrease when synthetic EPO is introduced, allowing for easier and more effective controls, he said.

Blood tests can indicate excessively high levels of EPO in the body but the system of drawing blood from athletes has been affected by many practical, legal, moral and religious problems.

Dr. Bjorn Ekblom of Stockholm, Sweden, who helped develop the urine-test system, admits it is still too unwieldy and expensive for everyday use now.

"We are on the way to work out a new system for more rapid determination, perhaps within hours," Ekblom said in a telephone interview.

If he and his fellow researchers obtained proper funding, a new system could be in place by 2000.

D'Hooghe said he would raise the issue at next week's conference in Lausanne.

Beleaguered Samaranch not ready to go yet

PARIS (R) — Beleaguered IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch has reiterated he will quit if he loses a confidence vote at a special session in March.

"I have always said that the IOC congress is the IOC parliament and that the committee is the IOC government. If our parliament refuses to grant me its confidence, I will quit. It's as simple as that," Samaranch told the French daily Le Monde on Tuesday.

But the IOC leader, who received strong support on Sunday from the executive board members dealing with 2002 Winter Games bribery scandal, repeated he was not ready to go yet.

"We are facing a turmoil and as I'm captain I must stay on board," he said.

Samaranch felt the sanctions taken against six IOC members over the Salt Lake affair were severe.

"I think we have reacted with a remarkable rapidity. Five investigations are under way and we have completed ours first."

Heave taken a very harsh decision by excluding members," he said.

Asked if the way IOC members are appointed was out of date, Samaranch accepted things had to be changed.

"But don't forget I'm not the one who invented the appointments system," he said. "The idea was the founder Pierre de Coubertin's one."

"I did a lot to modify the IOC. When I was elected in 1980, half of the members were national Olympic committee presidents."

I have had to struggle to impose outside members such as women and athletes," he said.

Samaranch, whose final term lasts to 2001, said his successor should resemble a modern businessman. "If the next president is not rich enough to take on the IOC presidency, he will have to be on a payroll," he said.

"The next IOC president will have to live in Lausanne and be able to spend 90 per cent of his time at IOC headquarters. Above all, I think he must be an executive chairman."

China demands overhaul of IOC

LONDON (R) — China demanded Tuesday an overhaul of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the methods by which it selected Olympic host cities.

Sydney beat Beijing by two votes in the race to host the 2000 Olympics, a defeat viewed in China as a national disgrace.

On Sunday the IOC moved to suspend six of its 115 members after an internal investigation into claims that Salt Lake City offered bribes as part of its successful bid to stage the 2002 Winter Games.

There has also been controversy over the Sydney bid after organisers said last week they had signed agreements before the 1993 vote with 11 African officials, five of whom have been named in the Salt Lake City investigations.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said the time had come to update the IOC and the way it selected host cities.

"Problems that have been exposed speak to the fact that the IOC has not yet adapted to current conditions and must be reformed," Zhang said. "This includes the bidding process."

Zhang discounted any possibility of China being involved in the bribery scandal.

"China opposes any acts which endanger or jeopardise the purity of the Olympic movement," she said.

IOC chief Juan Antonio Samaranch said he did not believe any investigation was needed into Sydney's bid but added he would await a first-hand report before making a final decision.

Australian Broadcasting Commission television said the IOC had not closed the door on a full inquiry but was waiting for a report in February from official Jacques Rogge who was due to visit Sydney soon.

"We prefer to have a first hand report coming from Dr Rogge after his visit to Sydney," Samaranch said.

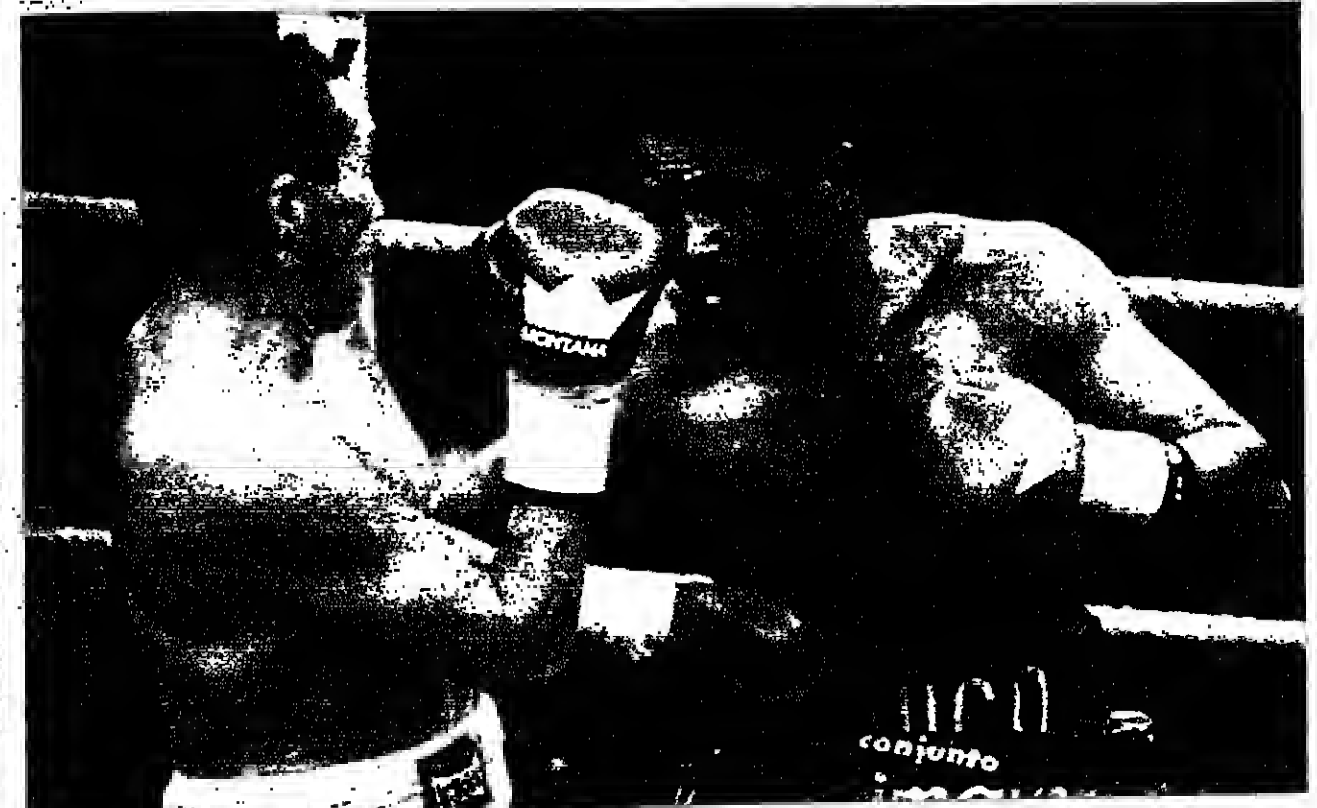
In Quito, Ecuador's IOC representative Agustin Arroyo, one of the six suspended members, said he did not plan to resign.

"I'm not thinking of resigning for two reasons," Arroyo told reporters.

"One, because I don't think it is an elegant exit to the problem. And two, resignation might give the impression that I am leaving because I feel guilty, that I don't want to be investigated."

"Leave to prevent an investigation? No, no, I don't accept that."

Mendy defends WBA lightweight crown



Blood runs from the eyebrow of Mexican challenger Arnulfo Castillo (R) as he fights Anatoly Alexandrov (L) of Russia during their World Boxing Organisation (WBO) super-featherweight title bout. Alexandrov retained his title when he stopped Castillo in the eighth round (Reuters photo)

PARIS (AFP) — French veteran Jean-Baptiste Mendy successfully defended his WBA lightweight title at a packed Palais des Sports here, beating Alberto Sicurella of Argentina on a points decision.

Sicurella gave a good account of himself and

matched the 35-year Mendy punch for punch in the early stages, despite the champion's greater reach, before taking a count in the sixth round.

That was to cost him as Mendy swiftly gained in confidence and started to take the fight to his opponent.

He was rewarded with a unanimous points win, obtaining scores of 118-110, 116-111 and 117-112 from the three fight judges.

Mendy, at 35 old for a champion in the lower weight divisions, first won the belt from unbeaten Orzubeck Nazarov in Paris

last May. Senegal-born Mendy's only previous fight since winning the title had been a points victory in a non-title bout against Russian Victor Baranov in October.

The former WBC champion boosted his record to 53-6-2 with one no contest.

Bulls sign Barry to six-year pact

NEW YORK (AP) — Brent Barry is no Michael Jordan, but he'll have to do for now.

Barry, a free-agent guard, joined the Chicago Bulls Monday, signing a six-year, \$27 million contract.

The former National Basketball Association slam dunk champion and son of Hall of Famer Rick Barry, averaged 9.6 points per game in three seasons with the Los Angeles Clippers and Miami Heat.

"If he does play well in Chicago, then they think they've got the next Michael Jordan," Miami coach Pat Riley said.

The Bulls also renounced the rights to forward Scott Burrell.

Meanwhile, Michael Olowokandi, the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft from Pacific University, was released from his contract with Kinder Bologna of the Italian

League and will join the Los Angeles Clippers.

The 7-foot-1, 221-lb center had signed with Kinder about 24 hours before the NBA and its players agreed recently to end the owners' lock-out.

Olowokandi's deal with Kinder bound him to the club until Feb. 15, but the team reportedly decided to release him and save money because he had averaged only 7.7 points and 5.6 rebounds in six games in Italy.

Guard Steve Nash, acquired in a draft-day trade from Phoenix, signed a six-year contract extension with the Dallas Mavericks that reportedly is worth \$18 million.

Bobby Hurley, a five-year NBA veteran, who suffered life-threatening injuries in a two-car accident in his rookie season with the Sacramento Kings, was waived by the Vancouver Grizzlies. The

Grizzlies had acquired Hurley, a former Duke star, in a four-player deal with Sacramento last Feb. 18.

The Portland Trail Blazers signed rookie guard Bonzi Wells to a three-year contract. Financial terms were not disclosed.

Wells, drafted out of Ball State, was acquired from the Detroit Pistons last week for a conditional first-round pick.

Three other guards — James Blackwell, Ernest Hall and Damian Owens — were cut by Blazers.

Three players were cut by the Atlanta Hawks — former Georgia Tech star Brian Olive; Mitch Henderson, a rookie from Princeton, and Jason Lawson, a reserve last season with Orlando.

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- Financial oversight of project and grantee finances;
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- Monitoring and management of local subcontract(s); and
- Financial and technical reporting on quarterly and annual basis.

Candidates must possess the following qualifications:

- At least ten years of work experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities listed, including eight year's experience managing international development projects with both for-profit contractors and grantees;
- Solid understanding of computers and local area networks, including experience in network systems administration, computerized monitoring and evaluation systems, database development and maintenance, and experience with Microsoft Project, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel and Corel Quattro Pro;
- Prior extensive experience with USAID rules and regulations concerning management of projects and procurement;
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Administration and Financial Department Amman Financial Market Housing Bank Complex, Sixth Floor Shmelsani Tel.: 560-7171
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Netanyahu mentor appointed Israel's new defence minister

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed Moshe Arens, a hawkish elder statesman in the ruling right-wing Likud Party, as Israel's defence minister on Tuesday.

Arens replaces the moderate Yitzhak Mordechai, who was fired by Netanyahu on Saturday for planning to join a centrist opposition party and challenge him for the prime ministership in May elections.

Speaking at a press conference alongside Arens, 73, and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, another leading Likud hawk, Netanyahu said, "I am proud to present this new team of Arens and Sharon who will lead Israel towards a real peace based on reciprocity."

Netanyahu also confirmed that he had pledged in writing to retain Sharon as foreign minister if he wins the May elections. He said no such promise was made to Arens.

Netanyahu described Arens, who came out of retirement to take on the new job, as "one of the top specialists in security matters."

Palestinian leaders had already reacted with dismay to the arrival of Arens, fearing even tougher positions from an Israeli government which has already frozen implementation of peace accords.

"This is an internal

[Israeli] matter, but we cannot conceal our anxiety at the continuing extremism within Israel," chief Palestinian peace negotiator Saeb Erekat told reporters this week about Mordechai's expected replacement by Arens.

A former mentor to Netanyahu who has been increasingly critical of his ex-protégé over the past two years, Arens was appointed only after losing a bid on Monday to replace Netanyahu as the leader and prime ministerial candidate of the Likud Party for the May elections.

His return to the defence ministry marks a sharp rightward shift for the post which was held for the past 30 months by the moderate Mordechai and for the four previous years by the late Labour Premier Yitzhak Rabin and then his dovish successor, Shimon Peres.

An American-trained engineer whose soft-spoken style belies his fierce political convictions, Arens is an unabashed hawk who opposed peace treaties with Egypt and the Palestinians and objected to the decision to end the costly 1982-1985 war in Lebanon.

He is a strong supporter of Jewish settlers in the territories and believes Israel should limit the damage Israeli rightwingers say was wrought by peace accords signed with the Palestinians

by the previous Labour government.

As ambassador to Washington in the early 1980s, Arens brought Netanyahu into politics, naming the then American immigrant and furniture salesman as a political advisor.

Under Arens' patronage Netanyahu advanced to become Israel's deputy ambassador to the United Nations and then deputy foreign minister when Arens took the foreign affairs portfolio in 1986.

Arens retired from active political life after Likud lost power in 1992 elections — but not before helping Netanyahu win a rancorous battle to take over the party leadership that year.

Since Netanyahu's election as prime minister in 1996, however, relations between the two men soured, with Arens bristling at the way the younger man elbowed aside Likud stalwarts to place his own team of loyalists in key positions.

Tensions between the two burst into the open this month when Arens, accusing Netanyahu of driving the Likud into crisis by forcing a rash of defection by senior party figures, challenged his former protégé for the Likud leadership.

Netanyahu overbwhelmingly defeated the challenger in a Likud primary election on Monday.



SHIPS ON PARADE: Tall ships and other vessels Tuesday pass by the Sydney Opera House in Darling Harbour during Australia Day celebrations. Polls released on the national holiday showed that a majority of Australians favour severing constitutional links to Britain and its royal family but were in a rush to become a republic (AFP photo)

Israel adopts law against return of Golan Heights, Arab east Jerusalem

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's parliament gave final approval Tuesday to a law toughening the conditions for any return of the Golan Heights to Syria or the handover of Arab east Jerusalem to the Palestinians.

Deputies in the 120-member Knesset voted 53 to 30 to adopt the law, which requires that any decision to withdraw "Israeli law, jurisdiction and administration" from land

where they currently apply be approved by at least 61 members of parliament as well as in a national referendum.

Current law allows concessions of such annexed territory to be adopted by a relative majority in parliament.

For the bill to become effective, the parliament must now adopt further legislation establishing the means for holding referendums on proposed land transfers.

The bill was sponsored by deputies opposed to any return of the Golan Heights, which Israel occupied in 1967 and where Israeli jurisdiction and laws were imposed in December 1981.

It would apply the same requirements to any move to cede parts of Arab east Jerusalem, which was occupied in 1967 and illegally annexed as part of Israel's "eternal capital" to the

Palestinians who want to make it the capital of a future independent state.

Syria demands the return of the whole of the Golan in exchange for a peace treaty and right-wing deputies wanted to push the legislation through parliament before the May elections, fearing the next Israeli government could agree to territorial concessions on the strategic plateau.

Senate mulls witness issue in Clinton trial

WASHINGTON (R) — Senators on Tuesday tackled the explosive issue of hearing witnesses in President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial, with prosecutors urging them to question Monica Lewinsky and even the president himself.

House of Representatives prosecutors asked the Senate to issue subpoenas for closed-door depositions from Lewinsky, Clinton friend Vernon Jordan and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal, and also formally asked the Senate to invite Clinton to appear at a deposition.

"We think that it is exceedingly important that you have an opportunity ... to examine him and these other witnesses to get at the truth of this matter and end all the speculation," said Representative Bill McCollum, a Florida Republican.

House prosecutors have said witnesses were crucial to making their case against Clinton on perjury and obstruction of justice charges stemming from the Lewinsky affair. But the White House and Democrats have said witnesses would only prolong and delay a verdict.

The prosecutors reluctantly trimmed their witness list to three during a closed-door meeting on Tuesday morning, deciding against calling Clinton secretary Betty Currie and White House Chief of Staff John Podesta after Republican senators warned them to keep the list short.

"They have told us the shorter the list, the more likely an affirmative vote," Hyde told reporters. "We have to be realistic. It's not our call, it's their call."

Senators debated behind closed doors for more than four hours on Monday on a motion

to dismiss the trial — with a vote expected probably on Wednesday — before turning to the witness issue, which has rolled the trial from the beginning.

Senators, who met in separate party caucuses before the trial resumed on Tuesday, continued discussing possible ways to end the proceedings, only the second presidential impeachment trial in history. Once the dismissal motion and the witness issue are decided, the bipartisan agreement on trial guidelines expires and senators have no road map for the next step.

If the 45 Democrats hold firm against witnesses, six Republicans could cross lines to vote against calling them and the trial would move directly to the articles of impeachment.

Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hinchison said Republicans were still looking at a way to

offer the prosecutors a chance to rebut the White House defence arguments, which the House has complained bitterly they were not allowed.

"I think not to let them have the ability to make their case would be wrong," she said. "This is something we are looking at."

Republicans also have discussed making a "finding of fact" that Clinton had committed the offences described in the articles of impeachment, without removing him from office.

Since that would require a 51-vote majority — rather than the 67 votes needed for conviction and removal from office — it could be approved with support only from the Senate's 55 Republicans. Democrats argued it would be unconstitutional.

"There will be a lot of ideas floated, crushed, and maybe

out of their ashes something will come," said Sen. Bob Graham, a Florida Democrat. "At some point, this thing will end."

Clinton, as he has throughout the trial, publicly ignored events in the Senate, and planned to meet Pope John Paul II in St. Louis.

The petition to invite Clinton followed an informal letter to the Senate from Hyde last week asking the Senate to consider seeking Clinton's testimony. The White House has said Clinton will not testify in the trial.

The House also asked the Senate to allow it to enter into evidence telephone records involving conversations between Clinton and Lewinsky that are not in the House impeachment record and some affidavits and declarations relating to the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

Yemen has kidnapping suspects under siege

ADEN (R) — Security forces in Yemen have laid siege to a mountainous area where four Islamists believed to be linked to the recent kidnapping of 16 Western tourists are hiding, official sources said Tuesday.

They said the government was seeking the help of tribesmen to negotiate with the four Yemenis — hiding in an area called Waddeh in the southern province of Abyan — to try to bring about their peaceful surrender.

Three militants alleged to have been involved in the kidnapping of the tourists in December went on trial in Yemen this month charged with murder and kidnapping. They could face the

death penalty if convicted.

The same charges were laid in absentia against 11 others.

Four of the tourists were killed during a rescue attempt. Yemen said three kidnappers were also killed.

The official Yemen news agency SABA said on Monday President Ali Abdullah Saleh had written to British Prime Minister Tony Blair asking London to hand over Abu Hamza Al Masri, head of the London-based Supporters of Sharia (Islamic law) group.

Yemen has accused Masri, an engineer of Arab origin who fought alongside Muslims in conflicts in Afghanistan and Bosnia, of links to the kidnapping of the 16 tourists.

'Missing' Indian president shows up on TV

BANGALORE (AFP) — India's state-run television mistakenly listed President K.R. Narayanan in a group of missing people and appealed for information as to his whereabouts, a red-faced official admitted Tuesday. Doordarshan's Bangalore station broadcast a photograph of India's head of state during a regular Monday programme on missing persons, a spokesman from the state network said. "If anyone knows the whereabouts of this person, please contact the police control room," an announcer said. Narayanan's photograph filled screens in hundreds of thousands of homes across southern India. Attributing the faux pas to a "communication gap" between station engineers and duty broadcasters, the Doordarshan spokesman said an official investigation had been ordered.

Stripping model slows down traffic

BARHAM (AFP) — A roadside poster of the Czech supermodel Eva Herzigova taking off her shirt has succeeded in slowing cars outside a road safety campaign's home. Cyril Long, 62, hit on the idea of placing the provocative picture of the Wonderbra model in the garden in Barham, eastern England, after motorists repeatedly ignored his hand-written pleas for them to cut their speed.

Man in bad luck suicide bid

ZAGREB (R) — A middle-aged Croatian man who stabbed himself with a butcher's knife, set his apartment on fire and jumped out of a first-floor window, survived with minor injuries, Jutarnji List newspaper reported. Josip Tusek, 55, had complained he had difficulty breathing but doctors, apparently, refused to operate on him. He then said he would perform the operation himself, his neighbours said. He suffered only a cut to his stomach and a broken leg after his suicide bid on Saturday.

Vatican updates exorcists' manual

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Four hundred years after its last publication on the subject, the Vatican Tuesday unveiled its latest manual for priests called on to practice exorcism. For the first time, the manual warns the victim could actually be more in need of a psychiatrist than a visit to the priest. The 90-page manual warns before attempting to chase out an evil spirit, the priest must decide whether the victim is actually possessed or needs referring to a psychiatrist or psychoanalyst. Among the signs of possession, the manual says, are the victim's use of unknown languages, discussion of the occult and signs of unusual physical strength.

Breast injury suit dismissed

BELLEVILLE (UPI) — A St. Louis-area judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed against a stripper who was accused of injuring a man by hitting him in the head with her breasts. Circuit Judge Robert LeChien Monday dismissed the suit filed in 1997 by 39-year-old Bernie Casson of Belleville, claiming he suffered bruises, lacerations and contusions in the encounter with Busty Hart's 88-inch chest.

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25 killed in Turkey clashes

TUNCALI (R) — Turkish troops killed 23 Kurdish guerrillas for the loss of two soldiers in clashes in eastern Turkey overnight, security officials said on Tuesday.

They said some 5,000 troops backed by U.S.-made Cobra and Sikorsky helicopters had launched an offensive late on Monday against some 100 Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels hiding in the rugged mountains near the town of Tunceli.

Three rebels were killed and tonnes of food and equipment seized in the operation, which was still under way.

In a separate clash, soldiers killed 20 PKK guerrillas while patrolling between the towns of Midyat and Nusaybin on the border with Syria, following a tip-off that PKK forces were in the area.

The rebels killed two soldiers, one an officer, and one soldier was wounded in the fighting.

Clashes between Turkish security forces and the PKK, which is fighting for self-rule in the mainly Kurdish south-east, have died down in recent months with the onset of harsh winter weather in the mountainous region.

Four Palestinians shot by Israeli army